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STRANGE VICTORY

A Study of the Holy Communion Service

By

MAX WARREN

*General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society;
Hon. Canon of Truro*

GENERAL PREFACE BY

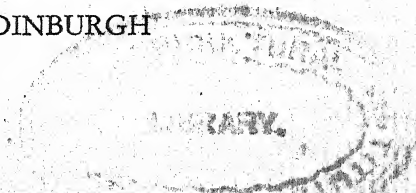
THE LORD BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN

"... strange victory
Sprung from the fiery embers of defeat."

—*Francis Brett Young*

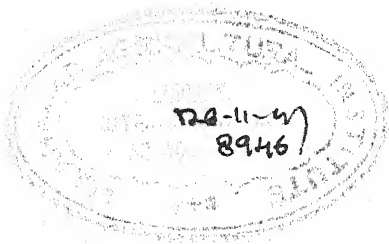


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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE Evangelical emphasis and interpretation in Christian theology for many years past has been voiced within the British Isles mainly by Free Church writers. It would be difficult to measure the obligation under which the whole Christian Church stands to thinkers like P. T. Forsyth, H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Whale, among a host of others, for their witness to the Protestant and Evangelical tradition in Christendom.

Too little contribution, however, has been made recently by those who share the same tradition within the Church of England. For there is a distinctively Anglican interpretation of Evangelical theology, which needs to be emphasised if our Church is to fulfil the hopes which have been conceived of her potentialities in the great cause of Christian Reunion.

There is good reason to think that such a revival of articulate Evangelicalism would be particularly appropriate in the present phase of the development of Christian theology. The recovery of a more definite and authoritarian tone in the presentation of the full Christian faith, and especially the value now widely given to the doctrine of Redemption in the light of man's desperate need, has given new heart to those Anglican Churchmen, who, while welcoming the freedom of thought and discussion which Liberal Protestantism has encouraged, have yet deplored its vague humanitarianism as a barren substitute for the full Christian gospel.

But there is a danger that this recent trend in theology is being exploited, on the one hand by the reactionary forces of Mediaevalism and Ultramontaniam, and on the other by an unreasoning Conservatism which applauds the Barthian mistrust of all human endeavour mainly because it shrinks itself from the challenge of modern scientific thought.

It is all-important to maintain a right proportion between Traditionalism and Liberalism, and to retain as far as possible the advantages of both by combining single-hearted loyalty to the Apostolic Faith with "boldness to examine and faith to trust all truth."

Such a balanced statement of Church of England teaching, which is in the true succession with those religious leaders who gave us our Prayer Book and Articles, should be peculiarly pertinent at the present time. For the exigencies of a life-and-death struggle have indeed demanded the immediate replacement of what is obsolete by more efficient methods and instruments, but at the same time they have accentuated the value of those truths and qualities that have enduring worth.

Young men and women, with whom are the hopes of future years, will respect the Church that bears loyal witness to the eternal verities of her Faith, but they will also expect her to show her efficiency and realism by interpreting those truths in language that is both intelligible and relevant.

St. Paul's Library, therefore, does not consist of exhaustive academic treatises, but of a series of volumes of moderate length, which present Church of England teaching on the basis of an integrated Evangelical theology, expressed in a way that is readable alike to the intelligent amateur and to the trained student. While each author has been left entirely free to express his own opinions, for which he alone is responsible, it is hoped that the series will constitute a constructive and homogenous contribution to Evangelical theology.

RALPH SODOR AND MAN.

PREFACE

MOST people could name at least two or three books the reading of which has been an introduction to a new world of thought and feeling, opening up to them fresh ranges of the Spirit. One such discovery for me was the reading in 1932 of Professor Aulén's *Christus Victor—an Historical Study of the Three Main types of the Idea of the Atonement*. What follows in this book is a small measure of my indebtedness.

If Professor Aulén's claim for the classic idea of the Atonement can be substantiated, then momentous consequences are involved for doctrine and worship and life. In particular I would suggest that the classic idea of the Atonement offers one most satisfying basis for the Evangelical understanding of the Holy Communion, and for a doctrine connected therewith which will be able to make as good a claim to being truly Catholic as any other.

"For my own part," says Professor Aulén, "I am persuaded that no form of Christian teaching has any future before it except such as can keep steadily in view the reality of the evil in the world, and go to meet the evil with a battle-song of triumph." In its classic form the idea of the Atonement is conceived primarily and supremely as the victory of God over sin and death and the forces of evil. On such a view the Sacrament of Holy Communion is in the first place a declaration by word and action of that victory in threefold form. All other aspects of the mystery find their place in due subordination to this over-ruling concept.

The following pages do not essay more than a very brief preliminary exploration of this theme, and even that only in relation to an attempt to interpret the Anglican Liturgy of 1662. That liturgy is still the one familiar to the great majority of Anglicans, and where that Church is growing most rapidly in numbers, that is in many dioceses overseas, it is the norm of Eucharistic worship. I have,

therefore, been concerned to interpret the liturgy as it stands, without considering its possible improvement as a rite.

At the same time there can be no understanding of the Holy Communion without some appreciation of doctrine and of Church history. Doctrine itself is interpretation. Doctrine and history alike take us back through the whole long story of the Church to those first Christian worshippers to whom at the Reformation the Church of England made its appeal—the Church of the New Testament and the early centuries. Our appeal to-day should be made to the same source. For while we shall naturally turn for guidance to the sixteenth and seventeenth century interpreters of our Reformed tradition we shall recognize that in some particulars, notably in the field of liturgy, we are in possession of knowledge not possessed by them. We have also watched our own Prayer Book services at work for nearly four hundred years, an experience that their compilers and first revisers necessarily lacked. Furthermore this liturgy has become the means of worship for a Church that is world-wide and includes people of a great variety of cultures and racial traditions. Some parts of that Church have already modified the use of 1662, though nowhere yet has the shape been decisively altered. All this constitutes the ground for a careful consideration of our forms of worship. A living worship has nothing to fear from such continuing scrutiny.

In an age of revolutionary change it is no use merely claiming sanctity for the status quo, and still more absurd in our situation to-day to imagine that an appeal to the law of the State can close the debate. The Anglican communion comprises many members whose States do not possess an Act of 1662 on their Statute Books. This is all very obvious but its implications have not yet been widely faced.

Whether or not our Church in years to come will decide in favour of modifications in our liturgical worship it is most highly desirable that Evangelical clergy and laity shall be giving the most open-minded and careful study to this subject, at the same time continually clarifying in

their minds the doctrinal basis of that liturgy which still satisfies so widely.

This book is a small attempt to help towards the end by one who loves the liturgy of 1662 and would have others enjoy its beauty and come to God through it, who for himself desires no change in it, but who does appreciate some of the reasons which prompt others to think differently.

The form of the book is governed by the forgoing apologia. Part I consists of three chapters. They attempt to answer three questions such as will in some fashion occur to the mind of all who "draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament". The first chapter can hardly be more difficult to read than it has been to write; it moves perforce in that dim region of the heart where the self is alone with its hopes and fears. It must stand alone, the detached but indispensable preliminary to the argument of the other chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 attempt to expound, with special reference to the Holy Communion, the classic idea of the Atonement as that is found in the New Testament, always holding in mind the fact that the reader is seeking a fuller view not of an idea but of the person of Christ. Part II consists of four chapters which comprise a study of the Holy Communion service as that is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. These chapters assume and in some degree illustrate the more specifically doctrinal chapters which precede them. But their purpose is to help the worshipper rather than the student. Part III is an essay addressed to all who within the Church of England would call themselves Evangelical. It is an invitation to a voyage of rediscovery as a preliminary to rededication.

In preparation for the writing of this book I decided to try and satisfy a long felt curiosity as to how it came about that one of the most noteworthy results of the Evangelical Movement in the Church of England was a great increase in the numbers attending, and the frequency of attendance at the Holy Communion in comparison with practice during the eighteenth century as a whole, and of the Church of England generally where it was untouched by the Evangelical Movement, and all this before 1833. I

have found in the writings of men like Charles Simeon, Basil Woodd, Legh Richmond, and more particularly of Edward Bickersteth and Daniel Wilson ample evidence of the central importance which they gave to the Holy Communion and their reasons for so doing. In *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper* by Edward Bickersteth and in extracts from many other writings there is indeed material for a new treasury of devotion, material for the most part unknown to this generation.

In addition an acknowledgment of gratitude must be made to Father Hebert of the Society of the Sacred Mission, Kelham, whose work as translator has made possible the enjoyment in English both of Professor Aulén's *Christus Victor* and also of Professor Brilioth's *Eucharistic Faith and Practice Evangelical and Catholic*. It will also be obvious to the reader how much I owe to the posthumously published book by Canon O. C. Quick, *The Gospel of the New World*, in which some of the insights of Professor Aulén find further and fuller development.

Only in a few footnotes have I been able to make any use of Dom Gregory Dix's most recent work *The Shape of the Liturgy* for I had no chance of reading and studying it until my manuscript was already in the press. Whatever view we take of the main thesis of that book all of us must be grateful for its challenging reconstruction of the early Eucharist; its frank description of the increasing distortion of Eucharistic worship from the fourth century onwards which made inevitable the liturgical revolution of the sixteenth century, and for the clarity with which it has posed the questions about the nature of the liturgy which have to be answered in our own day.

Finally, more personal thanks are due to the Rev. G. H. G. Hewitt, the Rev. T. W. Isherwood and the Rev. W. A. Kelk who gave painstaking care to a criticism of the manuscript, corrected many mistakes, made valuable suggestions, and yet must be held innocent of blame for the final result. The dedication offers homage where homage is most due.

M. A. C. W.

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To
MARY
WHO IS ALSO
MARTHA

PART I

Introduction to the Holy Communion

I

HOW SHALL I COME?

"**M**y God, my God, why have I forsaken thee?"—that unspoken cry from the lips of Peter by the fire offers one way, perhaps the only one, by which our generation of Christians can hope to enter the darkness of Calvary. For it is dark there. And we tragically misunderstand ourselves and misjudge our situation if, looking at the Cross, we expect to see it empty in the sunshine. That vision can be ours, but we cannot earn it, and we cannot just claim it as some self-evident right because we happen to live after the Resurrection. Indeed, there is an all too common way of talking about the Resurrection amongst Christian people to-day which succeeds in combining the acme of orthodoxy with the maximum of irrelevance. Rather should we take our stand beside Peter in the firelight and with him watch the shadows fade in the greyness of a dawn which is to see such dark deeds, and itself be darkened.

Long, long afterwards that same Peter watched fantastic shadows playing on the walls of a catacomb as, by the lamplight, he wrote of "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and prepared himself to die. But we shall only be able to join him there and share the strange victory if in the first place we have sincerely acknowledged that as individuals, and also as a community of Christians, our conduct all too often marks out our true place as being beside the brazier doing our tragic best to ensure that the darkness of Calvary shall indeed be a "darkness over all the earth."

In that darkness the eerie stillness was broken by a cry which has teased the minds of Christians for nearly two

thousand years. Interpretation follows interpretation, and perhaps each of them has a little of the truth. At least this we can surely claim, that woven into that cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was the agony of a love which had identified itself completely with Peter, and been unable to stop his denial, which had stumbled along beside Judas on his way to the field of blood and been unable to stop his suicide, which had shared the flight of each of the disciples, and been unable to halt that bitter forsaking.

The betrayal of Christ by His own—that is the point where evil touches its deepest mystery. For these were not just His own people, in the generic sense of St. John 1 : 11, but the people of His own choice, His disciples, His friends, His companions of how many journeys and of how deep confidences. They had been promised the power born of the authority of the sons of God, and the power when put to the final test had failed to work. He had made such tremendous claims for them, "power over all the power of the enemy : and nothing shall by any means hurt you", (St. Luke 10 : 19). But a servant-maid and the possibility of arrest had made nonsense of it all. My God ! My God !

And all that, not just in the uncertainties of the Passover night long ago, but continuing down the centuries, in spite of "the glory of the Lord's resurrection." If the darkness of the Cross covered all history, it covered all future history. The sobbing notes of the Negro chorus are true, "I was there when they crucified my Lord." We all were, and are.

What message then have we, as Christians, for men in the actual predicament in which they find themselves to-day? Do we even know what that predicament is? We Christians so desperately easily get out of touch with our fellow-men. Our very spiritual experiences themselves, providing us as they do with a genuine field of initiative, subtly obscure from us the unutterable poverty of life amongst our fellows which deprives them of any initiative whatever. Then we magnify these experiences in language which too often builds another barrier. Before

we know where we are we are living in a cloud-cuckoo-land of religious activities which are insulated all too successfully from any effective contact with the brutish world around. If we doubt the truth of that picture let us honestly ask ourselves what impact our particular chosen vocation is making upon those two giants which loom incessantly menacing over the life of men and women to-day—the all-devouring economic machine and the everywhere-intrusive modern State.

There must be no evasive talk here about Christians avoiding the spheres of economics and politics. Our Lord on the night that He was betrayed took a basin and washed His disciples' feet, and said to them "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (St. John 13 : 15). A little later He said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (St. John 15 : 12). By no legitimate interpretation can that example and that command be restricted from covering the economics of that acquisitive society which is smashing itself, and the world with it, under our very eyes. Men and women of the world are surely entitled to see Christians organised amongst themselves on a basis of mutual service and demonstrable community. Do they see anything like that? Is that anything whatever like the impression made by the Christian Church on our world to-day? Let us be more direct. Do we, in our handling of our jobs, give any hint of this Christian attitude? Do you? Are we centres of rebellion against compromise, persistent fomenters of revolt against the social and economic values of the world? If not, then we are betraying our Lord.

What about the everywhere-intrusive modern State? How anyone who believes that Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," can suggest that Jesus was indifferent to politics passes comprehension. Either He was evading the issue by word-play, or He was presenting His followers with another illustration of the narrow way which leads to life. To shrink from that way because it is narrow, beset with dangerous falls on either side, is to step back from

discipleship : it is to forsake Christ as certainly as did the disciples in Gethsemane. To say, as some modern commentators do, that in a totalitarian State there can be no politics, and that as the Empire of Tiberius was totalitarian therefore there could be no politics then, and that therefore Jesus could not be concerned with politics, is to juggle with words. Politics, fundamentally, are the manifold activities of citizenship. However differently the relationships of citizens with the state may be organized those relationships constitute the field of politics. In that sphere Caesar has a proper function to perform just so long as men have to be governed by law, which is to say as long as history lasts. Within that sphere Caesar is entitled to remind us that he "does not bear the sword in vain." But he bears that sword for God and not for Caesar. The rights of Caesar are given him by God and not against God. The abiding tension of Christian citizenship lies in knowing when to obey and when to rebel. Rebellion, in some circumstances, may have to be limited to the refusal of consent. In politics, however, it is wise to remember that silence gives consent. And consent may be betrayal. The quarrel of common men and women with us Christians is that corporately we seem to have lost any capacity for rebellion. Everywhere Christianity seems content to be a national religion. There are glorious individual exceptions, of course. And to the great glory of her Lord the Church of Norway acted corporately in her hour of challenge. But the trouble with Caesar is that he cannot always be relied on to be so crude in his challenge as he was in Norway. Normally he fogs our minds with pious clichés and hides behind an artificial mist of technical complexities. Of course international problems are complex, and of course they need experts to advise in their handling. But the handling of the international problems of the last thirty years entirely by experts does not seem to provide a convincing case for trusting them with the problems of the next thirty years. Is this asking for a world governed by well-intentioned idealists? Not for a moment. What is asked, what ordinary people are asking, is that Christian leaders and thinkers

shall not only lay down clear principles, which indeed they have done, but shall go on publicly to demand their effective acknowledgment, and if that be finally denied shall summon Christian believers to decisive non-co-operation with the State at whatever cost. Only those in high office, who are the watchmen of the Church, will be able to measure the full difficulty of this task. Yet only so will the ordinary man have something tangible by which to assess the degree to which Caesar is being allowed by the Church to get away with what belongs to God. It might be very dangerous, of course. It might even lead to Caesar imagining that the Church was interfering. The old question might be heard once more "Art thou a king then?" We in our turn might find ourselves in the catacombs reading about the "resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and preparing to die. That might prove to be our duty towards our neighbour, our Church, and our God.

It is a fundamental error, completely destructive of Christian citizenship and any sort of democratic ordering of our common life, to maintain that these great issues are remote from the lives of individual men and women. Actually the giants of economic pressure and the everywhere-intrusive modern State are bringing men and women to the point of a slavery nothing like as remote as that other which stirred the conscience of our forefathers. That was a slavery across the seas. This is a slavery at our very doorsteps. Only an intensely alert citizenry, strong in its Christian convictions and possessing a real power of initiative which it is prepared to use, will avail in the days ahead to preserve and advance those common freedoms for ourselves and mankind without which any sort of effective religious freedom will very soon be discovered to have vanished.

Once the early Church discovered that the end of history, as originally anticipated, was not immediately to come, discipleship was seen to involve social and economic and political responsibilities. The early Church found this a difficult lesson to absorb. But even in the earliest days the

evasion of civic duty on account of an expected end of the world was not a course of action open to Christians. Paul dealt with that particular evasion in his second letter to the defaulting Christians of Thessalonica. And he made it an issue of loyalty to Christ. (2 Thess. 3 : 6-16)

But, it may be said, all this talk of betraying our Lord has so far been little more than a thinly disguised political tract. Are there not sins of pride and covetousness and lust by which we betray our Lord, sins more nearly within the compass of the individual's total experience through which he may see the relevance of the Cross in relation to his rescue from their dominion? Of course there are just such sins, and all the infinite variations of them, which each one of us knows in the dark places of his individual heart, all those treacheries by which we are known to ourselves as betrayers of the Christ.

What is here argued is that the true Christian understanding of sin sees these evil things as never being for one single moment merely individual, but at all times as having a social reference. Every sin we commit is at once a sin against Christ the Saviour of the individual, and at the same time a sin against Christ the Head of the Body. And "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (I Cor. 12 : 26). To injure the Head is to injure all the other members also. We are bound together in a bundle of sinfulness, and Christ is bound by our sins. That is the awful thing about the sins of Christians. In a very special way we not only assist at the first crucifixion, and as sinful men share in the rejection of Christ by men, but also as disciples, as his friends, we betray Him, crucifying the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6 : 6). He is doubly involved with us. As men and women He loves us and dies for us. But if, as those who have been "given him by the Father", we betray Him He suffers a double wounding. Just because at some Caesarea Philippi we have said "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" so the more certainly we cannot forbear to cry "My God, my God, why have I forsaken thee?" The more clearly we acknowledge Christ as Lord the more tragic becomes our cry, and the more

hopeless our despair. Such despair is authentically Christian. It is only possible to those who have felt something of the drawing power of Christ upon their own souls. To see our betrayal as further involving, in addition to Christ, all our brethren in some degree, and some of them with devastating immediacy, this is to touch the depths of human despair. It is essentially an experience which can only be known by the man or woman who has actually known Christ, and is a conscious member of a Christian fellowship. This cannot be demanded as a pre-requisite to conversion. It is the crisis of the Christian.

And here is the mystery—our cry of dereliction and Christ's own great cry of loneliness are caught up into one. In our crisis the Christ knows Calvary. He is betrayed, and at this point of the world's redemption He hangs alone in the darkness of our refusal, and, in the apparent failure of His love, feels cut off from Love. And the darkness endures for Him until our cry echoes in His ears. His cry endures until our cry joins His. Only then does He see of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Only then "It is finished."

Now see that experience for what, in fact it is, a part of the corporate betrayal by the whole body of Christians betraying Christ together. Then the intercession of the Christ at the right hand of God becomes not an activity in some remote heaven but the abiding presence of the crucified Redeemer in this sinful world amongst His sinful people, for He is indeed the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. As a perpetual reminder of that fact, as an assurance in the moment of our despair, we can see the Christ meeting defeat and prepared to plumb defeat after defeat and yet winning in the teeth of every defeat the victory of obedience which is the victory of love. . . .

It is the hour of betrayal. The sands of time are running out very fast.

"And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That

thou doest, do quickly. . . . He then having received the sop went immediately out : and it was night. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him " (St. John 13 : 26, 27, 30, 31).

And then¹ He took bread and brake it and gave it to them with the words " This is my body " and the wine with the words " This is my blood." The Cross was now inevitable. He had finally accepted its challenge and all it meant. In Judas He has tasted the first bitterness of failure, the first pangs of dying. He goes on loving. One last thing He must do. He must demonstrate beyond all fear of misunderstanding that love gives freely, and gives to the uttermost and keeps nothing back. That is love's victory. In a world like this that can mean only one thing—death. So He explains " my body which is broken for you," " my blood which is shed for you," and as an assurance against all the days ahead He adds " do this in remembrance of me." So began the strange victory.

How, then, shall I come to the Holy Communion ? With gratitude, with self-distrust, with confidence, I must come. With gratitude, because in spite of myself and all I have done against Him, all my individual share in corporate evil, the Christ yet invites me. With self-distrust, because I know a little about myself and how easily I can be seduced into some fresh betrayal. With confidence, because He who gives the invitation knows me better than I know myself, and because from my experience of defeat He alone can snatch victory.

¹I follow Archbishop Temple's intuition here, though fully appreciating the difficult chronology of the events in the Upper Room.

II

WHOM SHALL I MEET?

THE strangeness of the victory, which was so unexpected at the first, and which still never fails of surprise, is that it sprang from the very embers of defeat. It was men and women who recognised in themselves the carnage of defeat and the sentence of death; it was they who first shared in the victory. The argument of the first chapter was that for us the full significance of the victory must remain concealed from sight, unless there be in us at least some approximation to "the broken and contrite heart." Unless we can see the sentence of death as being passed upon ourselves and already working itself out in ourselves the victory remains hidden. It is at the point of acknowledged defeat that victory is won.

Now historically it was the fact of the risen Christ which demonstrated that the victory had been won. In His own person before their very eyes He had broken the bread and poured out the wine, enacting the Cross before the event; making that broken bread and poured-out wine the expressive symbols of a love which, however sinned against, never ceases to love the sinner, and never shrinks from the appointed obedience to the will of God. In the risen Christ sin had found its master. And that same risen Christ demonstrated in His own person that death had no final holding power.

The Christ who revealed Himself to the puzzled, doubting, fearful eyes of those shattered men and women was the victorious Christ. He was that before anything else. Later they were to discover the manifold implications of the victory, but from the first the victory itself was fundamental. Everything hinged on that. Their message was Jesus crucified—risen. "Him . . . crucified . . . God hath raised up" (Acts 2: 23, 24) is the heart of the message of

Peter at Pentecost. "Ye . . . killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3 : 15), is the pivot of Peter's apology in the Temple a few days later, the all-sufficient explanation, incidentally, of the new Peter. On trial before the Sanhedrin Peter maintains the same emphasis "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 4 : 10). A few days later, before the same exasperated audience, Peter reiterates his claim "God . . . raised up Jesus, whom ye slew" (Acts 5 : 30).

Stephen, the first martyr, bears a similar witness in most poignant fashion. His long interpretation of history reaches the words "The Just One ; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers" : and within a moment he is on his way to his own murder, but not before he has borne his testimony to the Apostolic Gospel—"I see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7 : 56). The same message is implicit in Philip's exposition of Isaiah, Chapter 53. The Jesus whom Philip proclaims was indeed the one whose life was taken from the earth, but He was also no less surely Jesus Christ the Son of God (Acts 8 : 33, 37). Paul's first recorded sermon in Antioch of Pisidia bears the same characteristic. It finds its climax also in the story of the one of whom Paul said : "when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13 : 29, 30).

This explicit holding together of the Cross and the resurrection—this consistent and persistent emphasis laid on Jesus not just as crucified, nor just as risen, but always as crucified-risen, is of central importance not only for the preaching of the Gospel but also for the worship of the Church.

A too exclusive concentration upon the Cross and the fact of dying as a punishment for sin, vicarious and substitutionary though it be, will almost inevitably become involved in juridical theories of the atonement with the subsequent tendency towards legalism in all fields of religious activity. And furthermore this emphasis easily opens the way to a

highly emotionalised preoccupation with the Passion as alone being the proper focus of popular devotion.

Equally surely a one-sided stress on the Resurrection and an under-emphasis on the Death and its cause and its purpose will tend to a belittling of the fact of sin and the need of forgiveness. Life is a lovely thing; we all love life and the joy of living. But that very reverence for life in which this love and joy find expression can all too easily become an evasion of the ugly things in life,¹ and so prove too superficial to meet the needs of men.

In distinction from both of these tendencies in Christian thought about the work of Christ, there is what has been called the "classic" idea of the atonement¹. Here, as strongly stated as in any juridical view, is the heinousness of sin and its intimate relationship with death. Here, though approached from a different point of view, is the same concern about forgiveness. And here, no less, is an overwhelming sense that salvation is in fact life, and that not to know salvation is in fact death. But whereas in the one case the Cross is primarily, if not exclusively, the place of forgiveness, and in the other the resurrection is visualized by itself as the triumph of life, in the classic view of the work of Christ He is supremely the Victor—the victor over sin and death and the giver of life. Every other aspect of His person is subordinate to this. And the victor is Christ crucified-risen.

The effect of this view of the work of Christ on the worship of the Church, and, in particular, in relation to the service of Holy Communion, is the major theme of this book, but before coming to that theme it is important to expound more fully what is here meant by the victory of Christ.

Stress has here been laid on the fact that the victorious Christ is viewed as crucified-risen, neither attribute being emphasised at the expense of the other. It is important, however, for our understanding of this doctrine, to realise

¹ cf. Aulén *Christus Victor*, p. 22. "The classic idea has in reality held a place in the history of Christian doctrine whose importance it would not be easy to exaggerate. Though it is expressed in a variety of forms . . . there can be no dispute that it is the dominant idea of the Atonement throughout the early Church period."

that the Person of Christ is not, as it were, conceived in terms of a three-day significance. The dying and rising-again which in point of time occupy this small space that we can measure by three days are but the focus of an experience which immediately goes back to Bethlehem and forward to "the right hand of the Majesty on high." The death was the culmination of a life-time of dying. Incarnation and Crucifixion combine to form one sustained offering of obedience. And the risen life finds its meaning not only in this world but in that concurrent world which we call eternity. But even this immediate extension of the three days is only partial truth. Bethlehem was the beginning of the revelation of what had been from the Beginning. And the Ascension was not a final event, it was the prelude to Pentecost. The victory of the Christ lies in this that now through Him man can be, what man was created to be, at-one with God.

Over what are we to understand that Christ won the victory which makes Him supremely the victor? The answer of the "classic" view is over sin, death and the devil. What is much more important than the unsatisfactory exercise of defining the devil is to recognise frankly the invariable human tendency to personalise experience, and more particularly spiritual experience.¹ What is more important still is to realise that in the "classic" view these evil experiences are inseparably connected. Sin involves death, but it is also a part of death. As Irenaeus says "Fellowship with God is life and light, and the fruition of the good things that are with him. But on those who voluntarily rebel against God, He brings separation from Him; and separation from God is death".² Sin and death or Sin-death is the experience through which the powers of evil are discovered by men.

According to the "classic" view "The Word of God," that is God Himself, has come into the world of human

¹For the scriptural background of such personalizing and for a full treatment of this difficult subject the reader is recommended to read *The Devil and God*, by W. Robinson (Lutterworth Press, 1944), and in particular the chapter headed *The Bible and the Devil*.

²Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 27.2.

experience, conditioned as we know it to be by sin and death. Here, sharing our experience, He has taken up the conflict with the powers of evil, and has carried that conflict through to a decisive victory. As an immediate and direct result there is a new relation between God and the world. A barrier has been overcome. In Christ God has established this new relation. Looked at from the point of view of God in His infinite love and knowledge that atonement has been achieved. Looked at from the point of view of man limited by the experience of time, there is a three-foldness about the atonement. An at-oneness has been made between God and man in Christ: God will in due course bring all things into at-oneness with himself, and meanwhile his atoning love goes out ceaselessly to that end.

The point to be noted in this view is that sin and death and the powers of evil are objective realities over which a victory has been won. In the language of the New Testament "You, being dead in your sins . . . hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2: 13-15). Here we see clearly sin and death and the powers of evil inextricably combined in a common overthrow which is directly associated with the victor, Christ crucified-risen.

Over against the powers of evil manifesting themselves through sin and death, a new situation has been established. And this new situation is the work of God. Man was powerless to save himself. And this work of God is a personal work, a personal intervention within the dominion of evil, in what Mr. C. S. Lewis has so aptly termed "enemy occupied territory":

*He breaks the power of cancell'd sin
He sets the prisoner free,*

or, as Irenaeus elsewhere has it:

"Mankind, that had fallen into captivity, is now by God's mercy delivered out of the power of them that held them in bondage. God had mercy upon his creation, and bestowed upon them a new salvation through his Word, that is, Christ, so that men might learn by experience that they cannot attain to incorruption by themselves, but by God's grace only."¹

This new situation, which is created by the victory of Christ, and which is variously described in the New Testament under the terms "eternal life" and "the kingdom of God", is a condition under which all things are become new; entered by the new birth it is the new age. The exciting thing about apostolic Christianity, its thrill which expressed itself in such boldness, lay precisely in the conviction of the Apostles, and of those to whom they communicated their convictions, that they really were living in a new world. In such a context forgiveness cannot simply be the remitting of a penalty, the discharge of a debt. It was much more exciting than that. It was introduction to a new order of living altogether. "The handwriting of ordinances" was not only blotted out and taken out of the way, but the people concerned were expressly told that there was a new kind of order now. The old order actually fomented disorder. As Paul puts it in Romans 7: 11, "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." The new order follows new principles. The life of Christ has to be demonstrated in "mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (Col. 3: 12, 13). These are to be put on with Christ. Being forgiven means living in this new kind of world which has been opened up by Christ's victory. In this thought of the victor, Christ crucified-risen, there is no belittling of sin and death and the powers of evil. Is not the whole purpose of the Incarnation "that he might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to man"?² Was not the Cross an exposure of the exceeding sinfulness of sin not only in that

¹ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 21.3.

² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, 18.7.

evil wounded Christ so cruelly, but even more damning in that the very excellences of human nature, religious devotion, love of country, fine culture and human justice conspired to slay the "Just One"? We are all found guilty before God. There is none righteous, no not one (Rom. 3 *passim*). The word "crucified" stands, and we did the crucifying, and we still do it, or rather the sin which enslaves us does it. In the power of His love the Christ brings within our reach an alternative to the mastery of sin. There is set before us the mastery of love. He offers us this mastery. That is the new situation created by his free grace. His ability to do this lies in his utter identification with the Father's will, and with us His sinful brethren, which is the obedience of the Incarnation consummated on the Cross. At the Cross I am free to accept the Cross. Without the Cross I am not free. Accepting the Cross is, however, impossible without accepting the Resurrection. It is not Christ crucified who presents Himself to me as Saviour, but Christ crucified-risen. To accept the Cross must therefore involve the entrance into a new dimension of living. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 3 : 1). In the New Testament as we have said the two thoughts are inseparable. "To be made a son or child of God through Christ's atonement meant nothing less than to be already an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven which is eternal life."¹

In the New Testament, however, the significance of the new life through Christ crucified-risen is not and cannot be simply an experience of the Christian individual. We have already seen that the new order, however different its principles from the old order, was still a social order, indeed more completely a social order than the old could ever attempt to be. In the old order a nicely-balanced system of rights marked the boundaries between one man and another. In the new order the boundaries are swept aside in a life of unlimited obligation, for that must be the meaning of Colossians 3 : 13 where the agape of Christ becomes the norm of Christian living.

¹ O. C. Quick, *The Gospel of the New World*, p. 53.

The new life in Christ crucified-risen belongs only to those who accept His victory or rather submit to it, but it belongs to all who do so, and the experience of the new life means the new community. The most essential and characteristic content of this community life is agape, "God's triumphant love shed abroad in men's hearts through Christ, enabling them in faith to cry 'Abba, Father,' and establishing the Christian fellowship."¹ "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 St. John 3 : 14). The stern and inescapable challenge of the victorious Christ who stands and offers us His victory remains in the words with which John soberly closes the lyrical joy of the previous sentence, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

One significant note of the New Testament remains to be considered. The new life of a new relationship with God is a fact. The new community is a fact. But the new man in the new community still lives in time, and in a historical setting in which it is most painfully obvious that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8 : 22). And in that travail the Christian shares. Christ's atoning work is still, from one point of view, incomplete. "We see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2 : 8). not even in ourselves. This is the stern reality which so much pietistic language tends to obscure, and from which the coward in every Christian for ever seeks to escape. And one of the principal avenues of this escape, strangely enough, lies in the stress we Christians lay upon "the finished work of Christ" and "the one sacrifice for sins once offered." We can only rightly use that language if we are consciously aware of the fact that Calvary is not just "a green hill far away" in time and place, but an ever-present fact in the life of God. The Christ crucified-risen who intercedes for us suffers with us (Heb. 4 : 15). In a terribly true sense Christian men can "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (Heb. 6 : 6). Those words were written of Christians for Christians. They are set there for our learning and our warning. It

¹ O. C. Quick, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

must be so, of course, for if, in this new life opened for us by the victor, Christ crucified-risen, we are united with Him, then He still moves in this sinful world, He is still betrayed and forsaken by His disciples. If His victory is not a continuing present then are we of all men most miserable. But His victory *is* a continuing present. There is a true, vitally true sense in which even now, in the "nowness" of our sin we can "go forth unto him without the camp" and in the presence of that dying yet deathless love discover the strange victory which can win its triumph from the very embers of our defeat. By that hope we are saved, and by that same hope we can remain infinitely hopeful for the glory of that new creation which is to be revealed.

Whom shall I meet when I come to the Holy Communion? I shall meet with the victor of a real conflict. I shall meet the Christ who took the full shock of the attack of the powers of evil, who was tempted by every subtle means to swerve from His allegiance, and who tasted physical death as I must taste it. But I shall find in this Christ one upon whom evil left no mark, sin no stain, and death only the scars by which I recognise in Him, though now the King of Glory, yet one who still shares my human nature.

III

WHAT WILL HE DO?

IN an atmosphere tense with uncertainty and nervous debate, Jesus and His disciples had shared a meal together. It had been the evening meal before the day when the Passover lambs were sacrificed, and by long-established custom the mystery there to be celebrated had cast a ritual significance over the preparation of the day before. But what was thus hallowed was a common meal. Yet such unexpected things had already happened and such strange conversation had taken place that the events of that evening were never to be forgotten. Their ineffaceable memory is with us still.¹ The deliberate linking of the cup of thanksgiving with the coming establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and then the disturbing washing of the disciples' feet, how startling and perplexing it had all been! The feet-washing had been so unutterably humbling and only less devastating than the interpretation that followed. And on top of all this there came the apparent contradiction of talk about betrayal. Looking back afterwards they remembered that it was at this point that the first traitor had gone out. Then had followed the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup, a breaking and a

¹ The above paragraph will be seen to imply the conclusion that the Last Supper was not the Passover feast but the *Kiddush*, the common meal with ritual significance in preparation for a holy day. The question notoriously bristles with difficulty. Perhaps the shortest and simplest discussion of the varying views is to found in the first chapter of Brilioth's *Eucharistic Faith and Practice, Evangelical and Catholic*. His own summary may serve to set the issue in proportion.

"It is, however, very far from certain that the Last Supper was really the Passover-feast; and it is wisest to leave this question open. But the connection of the eucharist with the Passover does not rest on that very doubtful ground. It was a true instinct which led both Paul and John to speak of the Lord as the true Paschal Lamb; and for Christians the facts of His death and resurrection had given a new meaning to the Passover. In this way the ancient Semitic feast, with its roots in primitive religion, survived in Christianity; for Christians it had found its fulfilment in the events whose commemoration was the central point of the eucharist." Pp. 38, 39.

sharing by which the Gospel writers, as certainly as did Paul, understood our Lord to indicate His own approaching death. Luke adds the explicit statement of Jesus "this do in remembrance of me."

There in brief outline is the setting and the act round which Christian imagination down the centuries has built up the whole majestic fabric of Christian worship. Now, in humble reverence, we dare to believe that for our Lord Himself His action was in the first place the symbol of His victory. If that be questioned read again the record of the Upper Room, watch our Lord's quiet, unhurried, confident handling of all the events of the evening, hear again his assurance of that coming banquet in the fully-established Kingdom of God, ponder His penetrating analysis of coming events and the strange insistence on the victory already claimed, in those words where He says :

"Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world " (St. John 16 : 32, 33).

The breaking of His body, the pouring out of His blood, that was so soon to happen, were to fulfil the victorious obedience of His life, to demonstrate the fact that love cannot be conquered, to test and prove His own word that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," and that "he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal " (St. John 12 : 24, 25).

The broken bread and the poured-out wine were symbols of that victory. But that is not all. Jesus proceeded to share the broken bread with His disciples and the cup which they all drank. Whatever else this action was understood to mean by the disciples in that moment, surely it is reasonable to believe that for Jesus it signified His intention that His disciples should share His victory. Once again all

the recorded conversations of the Upper Room and the road to Gethsemane make certain that this was so. The banquet in the Kingdom which He was going to win was to be a banquet with His disciples (St. Luke 22 : 29, 30,) who would presumably be sharing His victory, and the whole discourse recorded in St. John Chapters 15-17, spoken, if Archbishop William Temple's conjecture be accepted,¹ in the Temple Court on the way to Gethsemane implies the oneness of the disciples and their Master.

And there is a strong presumption that the sharing of the bread and wine which symbolised their sharing in His victory was also meant to enforce their community with one another as His disciples. His victorious obedience was to be reflected in their obedience to His command to love one another, a rebuke and a command sorely needed and abundantly justified by the behaviour of His disciples then and now. Their victorious unity was in turn to be an effective instrument in realising His own victory for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (St. John 13 : 35). Certainly in the great prayer recorded in Chapter 17 we hear Jesus praying for the unity of His disciples within the context of His own offering of Himself in a final sacrifice of obedience to the Father.

Finally, in our attempt to understand the immediate significance of these symbolic actions for our Lord Himself we hear His words, "this do in remembrance of me." Luke and Paul alone record this utterance, and its absence from the earliest Gospel, Mark, as well as from Matthew, has led some to question whether our Lord ever intended His symbolic act to be repeated. Without wishing to appear to take this objection too seriously, it may be replied that from the very earliest days of the Church there was at the heart of its life a significant religious meal which the brethren ate "with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God" (Acts 2 : 46). This may well have been no more than a Christian version of the religious meals common in Judaism. There is no record of the memorial of the death of Jesus at this breaking of bread though indeed

¹ Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, second series, p. 250.

our records are far too scanty to assert that there was no such memorial. But if Mark gives us the tradition as it was received by the Church at Jerusalem of the solemn breaking of the bread at the Last Supper it is unreasonable to suggest that there was no relation between the Last Supper and the religious meal of the early Christians. There is also surely an artless primitiveness about the story recorded in St. Luke 24: 30-35 of how on the first Easter day Jesus "was known" to two of His disciples. "in the breaking of bread." Here the link is made from the very beginning. It would have been a remarkable achievement even for Paul (leaving on one side his moral obliquity if he invented the story) to have broken ruthlessly with the tradition of the love-feast, and to have imposed something quite new as a divine command, unless already embedded in the love-feast was that act of memorial that bound the believer to the action of the Upper Room. Far more reasonable is it to assume that in the disorderly, rather sophisticated and Gentile Church of Corinth the agape was in danger of degenerating into a pagan Bacchanalia. From such perversion the disciplined and rather Puritan instincts of the Jew Paul would instinctively recoil in horror. Knowing his belief about the Person of the Christ we can the better understand his sense of the blasphemy involved, when, in such a mood, the Christians of Corinth gather for the Christian meal, love-feast and Lord's Supper in one. Only against such a background can we understand the sternness of the warning

"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11: 29).

One remaining and related point may be made. If what was written in an earlier chapter is true and if the teaching that salvation is the gift of life in the place of sin-death really is the secret of the note of triumph that is so characteristic of Apostolic Christianity then we have a further insight into the spirit which led the Christians after Pentecost to eat "with joy and gladness of heart, praising God." They were living in the kingdom of God the life of triumph

won for them by the strange victory of Calvary and Easter Day. Already the strange symbol of that victory was the tree on Calvary hill. Could they break bread and share wine together without thinking of the symbols of the Upper Room? Could they help making the meal a Eucharist?

All this is not to claim that there was any formulated doctrine. It is only to assert that there was a tremendous sense of victory, and that the corporate re-discovery and reaffirmation of that victory, took the form of breaking bread and sharing wine according to the pattern of the Upper Room and in obedience to our Lord's command. And the predominant note would have been thanksgiving, thanksgiving for victory. Other emphases might follow. This comes first. And this emphasis endured far beyond the early rapture after Pentecost. In the *Didache*, early relic of the sub-apostolic age, we have the earliest recorded eucharistic prayer,¹ so early that the agape has not yet been dissociated from it (interesting evidence as that incidentally is how reluctantly the Church allowed the central act of its worship to be divorced from its common life). This eucharistic prayer runs as follows :

"As touching the eucharistic thanksgiving give ye thanks thus.²

First, as regards the cup : We give thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of thy Son David which thou madest known unto us through thy Son Jesus ; thine is the glory for ever and ever. Then as regards the broken bread : we give thee thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known unto us through thy Son Jesus ; thine is the glory for ever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may thy Church be gathered together from the

¹ cf. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, pp. 90-93, for another view. cf. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship*, pp. 7, 8, for the view that Clement of Rome's Letter to the Corinthians (A.D. 96) enshrines eucharistic material.

² As late as the early third century we find embedded in the canons of St. Hippolytus evidence of the still close association of the congregational meal (agape) and the congregational worship (eucharist). The divorce is still not complete.

ends of the earth into thy Kingdom: for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus, Christ for ever and ever. . . .

And after ye are satisfied thus give ye thanks :

We give thee thanks, Holy Father, for thy holy name which thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which thou hast made known unto us through thy Son Jesus ; thine is the glory for ever and ever. Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through thy Son. Before all things we give thee thanks that thou art powerful ; thine is the glory for ever and ever. Remember, Lord, thy Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in thy love ; and gather it together from the four winds—even the Church which has been sanctified—into thy Kingdom which thou hast prepared for it ; for thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy let him come ; if any man is not, let him repent. Maran Atha. Amen."

Here is almost a lyric note of triumph. It is a hymn to the victor King. Salvation is life, life that is the opposite of death and evil and the sin that scatters and separates between men. Yet whoever compiled the *Didache* realised the strangeness of the victory, and gave most striking testimony to the fact. In the closing sentences he is looking towards the last days, and he uses this phrase "they that endure in their faith shall be saved by the Curse Himself." Hanged on the cursed tree He becomes a curse for us. It is a vivid metaphor, and in this setting ample evidence that, intoxicated as they were with the new life, the early Christians did not forget that they were bought with a price.

In the middle of the second century we get evidence of

the same dominant note of victory as the primary meaning of the Eucharist in the writings of Justin Martyr. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* he writes of the Eucharist:

"The celebration of which our Lord Jesus Christ prescribed, in remembrance of the suffering he endured for all those who are purified in soul from all iniquity, and in order that at the same time we might give God thanks for having created the world, with all things that are in it, for the sake of man, and for delivering us from the evil in which we were, and for overthrowing utterly the principalities and powers by him who suffered according to his will."¹

Early in the third century comes the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus from which both Eastern and Western Liturgies derive. In the very heart of the Eucharistic Canon the work of Christ is described as follows:

"When he was being given over to his willing suffering that he might dissolve death, break the chains of the devil, tread hell underfoot, illuminate the righteous, set a bound (to death) and manifest forth the Resurrection, having taken bread, gave thanks unto thee and said: Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you. Likewise also the cup, saying: This is my blood which is poured out for you. When ye do this ye make my memorial."

Once again pride of place is given to the objective fact of the victory won by Christ and the bread and wine are directly related to that victory. This note has never been wholly lost, indeed it could not be in a Church whose greatest festival is Easter. As Aulén reminds us, "Easter hymns still sound the note of the Divine conflict and triumph. The Paschal season has never ceased to be the impregnable citadel of the classic idea of the atonement".² But very early in the history of the Church other conceptions

¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 41.

² Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 149.

of the atonement, which laid a quite different major emphasis on the work of Christ came to hold the centre of men's allegiance and to set the tone for men's worship. One argument of this book is that we are not confined to the juridical theories of the atonement which dominated the thinking of the Middle Ages and governed the formulations of the Reformers, nor are we forced to accept the alternative of modern subjective and humanistic interpretations. We have a middle and a better way, Evangelical and Catholic, and true to the New Testament. This middle way is to be found in laying the main emphasis on the victory won by God in Christ over the forces of evil and their instruments sin and death. Let every other consideration be subordinated to that centrality, and let our whole approach to Christian worship and practice be worked out afresh in relation to this dominant theme.

Here we must confine ourselves strictly to the actual worship that focuses in the Holy Communion. What mean we by this Service? The foregoing argument may be summarised as the claim that the fact of victory is the dominant fact about the Upper Room, the Passion and Easter Day, that Christ is to be discovered and worshipped supremely as Christus Victor—Christ crucified-risen. On this view the action of the Christ in the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the wine, the sharing of these with His disciples, and the provision for the future, was essentially declaratory. And it was declaratory in three forms.

First, it was a declaration that in the NOW of the divine action, which we distinguish as Incarnation-Crucifixion-Resurrection, the victory is won over sin and death and the powers of evil. Their thralldom is decisively rejected. And as we break the bread and distribute it, as we bless the cup and share it, we declare that victory as something which has in fact happened. In the person of Jesus Christ our Lord all this occurred at an actual point in history covered by the reigning of two Caesars, Augustus and Tiberius. Upon that point all history converges and in relation to that historic NOW all Time finds its meaning.

His declaration was a mighty act of faith that the world as the sphere of sin and death and the powers of evil was in fact overcome. Our response of faith to His act is the continuing extension of that victory (1 John 5 : 4), for our faith is His gift. Nothing can take away from the strangeness of the claim or can minimise the strangeness, by sin-distorted standards, of our faith in that claim. Now, as in the early days, the declaration of the Cross is "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Nothing is stranger than the way in which "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Cor. 1 : 23, 24, 27).

In the *second* place the action of our Lord in the Upper Room was the declaration of a victory still to be accomplished. Accepting as authentic and at their face value the words "this do in remembrance of me," we cannot but discount the exaggerations in the view which maintains that our Lord envisaged His death as bringing human history to an end. On the evidence of Mark's Gospel alone, there is plenty of material to qualify this hypothesis. This earliest Gospel records the words of Jesus in which clearly He looks forward to His Passion.

"The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes : and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles : and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him" (St. Mark 10 : 33, 34).

That detailed awareness of what lay ahead is linked directly with the words, "and the third day He shall rise again." Indubitably that Resurrection was to usher in a new age, and the disciples recognised the new age as that new Kingdom about which Jesus spoke so often, and two of them with considerable promptitude tried to stake out their claim for important spheres of influence in the new order. Jesus, in His rebuke to them, does not, however, treat their error as he did later that of the Sadducee who

enquired about marriage after death. Then He made the point that the life after death was life in a totally new dimension. But here His Kingdom which is to be set up by His Death and Resurrection finds a direct analogy in the procedures of this world, and by implication will find partial, though not complete, fulfilment in history. To be sure Christian procedures are to be different. New values are to obtain, but human community as historically conditioned will still continue, with men and women giving service to one another and occupying varying responsibilities in that common service.

Even the famous passage known as the little Apocalypse (St. Mark 13) is much less decisive for an immediate end of the historic order than is commonly supposed. The warning of our Lord that "many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many" implies the continuance of history as do "wars and rumours of wars." Explicitly we are told "the end shall not be yet" (v. 7). How we are to translate the words (Matthew 24: 34), "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled," cannot be certain. It is at least reasonable to give the passage the force of anticipation. A prophetic foreshortening of history to One so conscious of the world beyond history must have been a natural manner of speaking. Lest His disciples should take Him too literally Mark tells us that Jesus describes Himself as a man "taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch" (St. Mark 13: 34). If all this is fair exegesis then it is not unreasonable to believe that Jesus said to those same servants "this do in remembrance of me," and that John was not romancing when he shows us Jesus looking down the vista of the years and praying not only for His then present disciples but "for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (St. John 17: 20).

The breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup were then also a declaration about the future. The victory won and announced with such confidence was indeed

decisive. But the end of the campaign was not yet. The whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, turns on the great paradox of Chapter 2 : 8, 9 and Chapter 3 : 1.

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet (*the victory has been won*) . . . but now we see not yet all things put under him (*the victory is still to be completed*). But we see Jesus . . . wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

The majestic argument sweeps on to embrace the whole process which men call history. It looks back to the disciples of the past, and looks on to the disciples of the future. It is utterly confident that His disciples in every age can say "we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved (*the victory is being won*), let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12 : 28), that God who is able to make *us* perfect in every good work to do His will, working in *us* that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever" (Heb. 13 : 21).

These two declarations Paul embodies in his statement about the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11 : 26): "for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." In adding the last three words Paul was being essentially true to the setting of the first Lord's Supper which looked forward to a future fulfilment. For all our Lord's teaching, though it was consistently practical and this-worldly in its immediate reference, yet never confined itself to this world or suggested that the full realisation of the Kingdom could come in history. The New Testament bears consistent witness to the conviction, based on our Lord's own teaching, that though the end is not yet there will be an end.

It is extraordinarily difficult for men and women of our day to give any meaning to such a phrase as "the end of history." Perhaps no part of the Biblical message provokes so little response to-day as the passages which attempt

to portray the "shape of things to come." This is paradoxical, indeed, because from one point of view it might almost be said that the only religion of many modern people is "Millennial Dawnism." No modern can afford to sneer at the material conceptions of the future revealed in the Apocalypse. Karl Marx has changed all that. Nor, perhaps, is that altogether surprising. The visions of apocalyptists were all coloured by the fundamental materialism of Hebrew thought, and Karl Marx was a Jew. Material Utopias are indeed the pathetic residuum of that mighty faith which turning its back on the revelation of Jesus Christ, thereby lost the clue to history. We who have been and are being so profoundly influenced day by day in all our thinking by two Jews, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, are in desperate danger of losing our way under their leadership. The truth in their insights will be discovered, the real flowering of their genius will be achieved, only if we can recapture the New Testament certainty, interpreting the end of history not as a full stop but rather as a great fulfilment. Wherever the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is victoriously realised by the presence of Christ crucified-risen in the life of a disciple or a fellowship of disciples, there history is already being fulfilled. How that fulfilment will be demonstrated on a universal scale we do not know. But it will be an act of God—that is certain. Perhaps we shall get nearest to understanding it if we remember that by an act of God in an Upper Room long ago men were made able to share in that action. As we show forth His death till He come we best prepare for and hasten that coming.

This brings us directly to the *third* great declaration made by our Lord by and through His action in the Upper Room. This is the declaration that the victory won is here and now available for the disciples. They can share in it. That declaration was made when He took the bread already broken and gave it to the disciples to eat and then passed the cup round for them to drink.

There is an individual and a corporate significance attached to this declaration both of which were implicit in that divine distribution of the bread and wine in the

Upper Room, and this double significance is there whenever we do this in remembrance of our Lord and in the way He did it. Both the individual and the corporate significance are indispensable. Neither is possible without the other. Jesus dealt with each disciple personally, but He dealt with them as persons in relation to one another as well as to Himself. There was the wonderful personal touch, as distinctively personal as the washing of each pair of feet, but it was for all of them together. This strange victory which He had just announced and which He now declared His intention to share, was a victory over that separation between men which, like separation from God, is a direct result of sin, and which is the shadow of death spread abroad all over our common life.

Two passages from the New Testament give us the exposition of this individual and corporate significance. But let it be reiterated that unless both are held together in the binding agape of the Upper Room neither can be enjoyed. There is no sharing of the victory on any other terms. In the Christian religion I cannot hug to myself a spiritual experience. The latent possibilities of such fade away if they are greedily grasped at. Spiritual experience is only discovered in the act of sharing it. It is the everlasting paradox of the broken bread and poured out wine. Only in losing your life do you win it. This is part of the strangeness of the victory.

The first passage for our consideration in this connection is given us in St. John, Chapter 6 : 54, 56, 57.

“Jesus said : Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life . . . he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

Eating and drinking are highly individual actions. There is no escaping the individual emphasis here. The infinite value of the individual man and woman in the sight of God is of the very essence of our Lord's revelation of the nature of man. Some of His profoundest teaching followed after

He had called a little child and set him in the midst (St. Matt. 18: 1-14). To offend one of these little ones, to pervert one single child was to merit final destruction. To give even a cup of cold water as an act of love was to be of the company of the Kingdom. It is interesting that it is in this setting that Matthew places the parable of the man with a hundred sheep who left the ninety and nine and went after the one. And the same Gospel, in Chapter 25, presents us with the teaching of our Lord that in the last Judgment our discipleship will be assessed in terms of our faithfulness in recognising the Christ Himself in the persons of those in need. It is therefore not surprising that the secret of victorious life was made available in such a form that the individual could appreciate it as a victory within the range of his own personal experience. And that victory is "eternal life"—a new relationship is established when, at the touch of the life of God, a man comes alive.

Fine expression is given to this individual note in the fourth century Liturgy of Bishop Serapion. In the anaphora occurs this prayer:

"Thou art the Fount of life, the Fount of Light, the Fount of all grace and all truth, O lover of men, O lover of the poor, who reconcilest thyself to all, and drawest all to thyself through the advent of thy only beloved Son. We beseech thee, make us living men."

But even here, true to the genius of the Liturgy, the individual is seen as one indeed, but as one in a company. Our second passage from the New Testament makes this thought explicit, and links it directly with the act of our Lord in the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the wine. In 1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17 (R.V.) we read:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread."

If sin and death have this as a distinguishing characteristic that both are separating and divisive, so that we think best of them as a hyphenated word sin-death, then it can scarcely be disputed that our Lord's declaratory act in the Upper Room, in so far as it was the offer to share His victory, was explicitly intended to unite His disciples with Himself and with one another. Whatever else the Sacrament of the Body and the Blood may be, it is beyond all doubt an *instrument* of unity first, and only secondarily an *expression* of unity. The disciples were united in the Sacrament as a result of being united by the Sacrament. And the unity in the Sacrament constituted a victorious act of the Christ. By anticipation in the Upper Room, actually at every other celebration of the Sacrament, part of the victory of Christ crucified-risen consists in the uniting of His disciples. Their natural human divisiveness is conquered. A new unity is created, a new community is born. And it is all the act of Christ Himself. In themselves those disciples in the Upper Room were as divided as modern Christendom. Each had his own individualistic preferences as to faith and his own quite simple conception of order which was for each man his own priority. At that point of division and sin and death Christ declared the victory of the broken body and the blood shed, broken and shed not in the sense in which men blasphemously speak of Christendom as "the broken body of Christ," but in the sense of agape, of love holding nothing back, of love embracing all, of love taking disunity and making out of it community.

Is all that a twentieth-century gloss upon the words and acts in the Upper Room? No. Paul sees the act of partaking as being itself the *instrument* of the unity. Earlier in this chapter we have seen how in the *Didache* the same truth is enforced. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom." The gatherer is Jesus Christ.

There is indeed as part of the common conviction of the early Church a profound belief that in the unity of the

Church is the victory of the Christ. It is "When Christians come together in unity that Satan's power is brought to nought."¹ What Pentecost demonstrated dramatically the day-to-day life of countless Christians confirms on a lesser scale. In our own day the "binding of Satan" is intimately associated with the unity of Christians as any evangelist knows. This deep conviction came to full expression in the writings of Augustine where interpreting the words "Give us this day our daily bread" of the Eucharist, he says, "The power which is here referred to is unity, that we, being incorporated in his body and made his members, may be that which we receive." He says in the same place,

"If then you are the body of Christ and his members, then that which is on the altar is the mystery of yourselves; receive the mystery of yourselves. You hear what you are, and you answer 'Amen,' and confirm the truth by your answer: for you hear the words 'the body of Christ' and you answer 'Amen.' Live as a member of the body of Christ, that your Amen may be truthful."²

And again in another place,

"He who receives the mystery of unity, and does not keep the bond of peace, receives not the mystery for his salvation, but rather as a witness against himself."³

The unity which Christ gives is for our bewildered generation perhaps the strangest part of His victory, the part we cannot understand because we persist in treating the *instrument* of unity as a badge of our disunion. Perhaps the pregnant thought of Augustine, expressing as it does one of the deepest strains in the experience of the early Church and in the witness of their Eucharist, though forgotten by his generation and by most subsequent generations since

¹ Brilioth, *op cit*, p. 28.

² Augustine, *Sermon LVII*.

³ Augustine, *Sermon CCLXXII*.

his time, will be newly appreciated by ourselves as we take our part in that fresh rediscovery of the Sacrament of the Body and the Blood which is so hopeful a feature of our religious life to-day.

Here, then, in this Sacrament we have "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." There in the Upper Room was manifested forth the Life. The Eternal Life which was with the Father declared Himself to us. The Church of each succeeding generation exists to extend the declaration to the world.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." (1 St. John 1 : 1-3).

What, then, will the Christ do when I meet Him at the Holy Communion ? He will try to make me see three facts about Himself which, once seen, make all things new. He will remind me of the victory won by Himself in person long ago. He will warn me that between the decisive victory and the end of the campaign there may yet be a long way to go. He will offer to share with me at that very moment the power of His resurrection so that I, too, may be a victor : and then, for His sake and for the sake of my fellow-men, go out into His world enabled by His strength to share in the fellowship of His sufferings. And this three-fold vision He will give to me not by myself but in company with His other disciples. We shall see the visions together, or not at all.

PART II

The Service of Holy Communion as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer interpreted in the light of the first three chapters.

IV

THE PREPARATION

DR. BRILIOTH, in his book on the Holy Communion to which reference has already been made, distinguishes four main elements, or aspects, in this great Christian act of worship

- I. Thanksgiving, or Eucharist.
- II. Communion—Fellowship.
- III. Commemoration, or the Historical Side.
- IV. Sacrifice, including the act of Memorial, and the Church's Self-oblation.

To these he adds (V) Mystery as an element which "embraces and unites all the others, and bridges the gap between the one act of the Saviour and the innumerable eucharists in which that act is apprehended in the experience of faith, and its benefits appropriated."¹

The argument of this book is that the very heart of this mystery, what indeed constitutes the strange unexpectedness of the Last Supper when first instituted, and the never-ceasing wonder of every successive celebration, is the victory there declared, anticipated and shared. This three-fold victory is to be the master-key of all our considerations and meditations, informing each and binding all together. There will probably be occasions when one or other aspect of the service occupies our mind to the exclusion of the

¹ Brilioth, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

others. This is very natural, and to be desired and encouraged. The human mind is so constituted that it can enjoy the balance of truth only by a succession of insights, and not by an instantaneous act of perception. What is vitally important is that every insight shall have its place. Dr. Brilioth enforces this when he says :

“ The way to guard the evangelical fulness of eucharistic doctrine is not the ‘ reducing method ’ of Puritanism. The eucharist is menaced at every point . . . by the danger of degradation to a pagan level ; and the danger becomes serious whenever any of the aspects of the eucharist is held in isolation from the rest. The effective defence is, therefore, the maintenance of all the aspects in their completeness and harmony.”¹

This small book cannot even attempt to maintain all the aspects “ in their completeness ” though it is hoped that all will be seen to have their due place. The key to their “ harmony ” is, however, offered in the mystery of that victory whose abiding three-fold reality this service of the Holy Communion is designed to enforce. It follows from all that has gone before that the focus of the whole service lies in the words and actions which re-declare the victory of our Lord which He represented to us when He took bread and brake it, took wine and blessed it, and then shared the bread and wine with His disciples. An indispensable part of this re-declaration is to be found in the act of communion by which we, His disciples, to-day accept the victory at His hands ; and also in what is known as the prayer of oblation in which, strengthened by that victory, we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be the instruments through which the victory is extended in our own time. Everything in the service looks forward to these most solemn moments. They are the moments to which what follows looks back, and in the strength of which we go out “ through ” the Sacrament to victory in the world.

The realisation that in this service we are brought in a

¹ Brilioth, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

special way and to a peculiar degree¹ into the real presence of the victorious Christ crucified-risen, the direct link which this service maintains with the Upper Room in which the victory was first declared, and our now sharing in the victory, all this combines to challenge us as to the way in which we shall prepare ourselves for the central moments of the service.

There is a sense in which it would be true to say that the whole service, until we come to the prayer of "humble access" immediately before the Consecration Prayer, is preparatory. It is truer, however, to the form of the Holy Communion which we are studying here to see the preparatory part of the service as proceeding down to and including the "comfortable words."² It will be noticed in studying this part of the service, that it begins and ends with the thought of victory over sin. The victor is God Himself, but because we are approaching Him as sinners who need that victory personally applied, a note of penitence may fairly be said to characterise this part of the service, and even when not explicit is never far below the surface. It is sinful men and women who prepare to receive the Sacrament of victory over sin.

This thought of the divine Victor and the disciple needing the victory so sorely links this part of the service with the dereliction of the disciples who betrayed Christ on the night when this Supper was first instituted, who went out from the Supper and so soon forsook Him and denied Him. Their overwhelming defeat was itself overwhelmed

¹ It was a no less convinced and devoted Evangelical than Edward Bickersteth who in *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, published in 1822, could write of the Holy Communion Service:

"It is only the Gospel that is efficacious through the grace of God to sweeten life, and console in death: to make us happy here, and blessed for ever hereafter: and nowhere has the Christian a more perceptible and lively exhibition of the Gospel than in this ordinance," p. 118.

and in the same passage he adds:

"Here we may have the nearest approaches to the Divine presence, that our state in this world admits," p. 119.

² There is good support for this division in Dr. J. H. Srawley's essay in *Liturgic and Worship*, Ed. by W. K. Lowther Clarke.

in the victory that was revealed to them on Easter Day, and interpreted to them in the forty days until the Ascension. So vivid, indeed, was the sense of that victory that the earliest records contain no reference to the note of penitence as an essential part of the "breaking of the bread," while in the development of the liturgy the penitential note comes late in history. This, of course, is not to say that the Church of the New Testament lacked a deep sense of sin. The contrary is the case, as the Gospels most strongly imply, and as the Epistles make explicit. Yet it may be hazarded that the early Church did, in fact, see sin in the light of the victory of the Cross and the Resurrection, and that the sense of victory now being enjoyed did form the main element in their worship. As Canon Quick reminded us, forgiveness in Christ meant for the early Christians a veritable "new birth or resurrection into the eternal life of the world to come."¹ . . . From their point of view to believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting was all one thing."¹

It is the part of realism and of humility to recognise how far we have fallen from this high confidence. It may fairly be conjectured that our lack in this respect derives directly from the present tragic division within the Church of Christ. Disunited we do not fulfil one at least of the conditions for an enjoyment of the "powers of the age to come." We do well, then, to lay a peculiar stress upon penitence in our preparation for receiving the Sacrament which speaks of unity. But in addition there is this further reason for stressing the note of penitence in our preparation that it does in truth link us with the dereliction of the first disciples. We are reminded by it just how devastating for them must have been the sense of defeat and dismay from Gethsemane until the evening of Easter Day. In this way we can with a lively sense of our own betrayals capture the thrill of the victory, and, by faith, know the Christ, crucified-risen, standing in our midst and saying "Peace."

¹ O. C. Quick, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Perfect expression is given to this approach to our preparation by one of the hymns of Charles Wesley, specially designed to prepare the heart by repentance for forgiveness, the whole being set within the context of Christ's victory :

*Come, O Thou all-victorious Lord,
Thy power to us make known ;
Strike with the hammer of Thy word,
And break these hearts of stone.*

*O that we all might now begin
Our foolishness to mourn,
And turn at once from every sin,
And to our Saviour turn !*

*Give us ourselves and Thee to know
In this our gracious day ;
Repentance unto life bestow,
And take our sins away.*

*Conclude us first in unbelief,
And freely then release ;
Fill every soul with sacred grief,
And then with sacred peace.*

*Impoverish, Lord, and then relieve,
And then enrich the poor ;
The knowledge of our sickness give,
Then knowledge of our cure.*

*That blessed sense of guilt impart,
And then remove the load ;
Trouble, and wash the troubled heart
In the atoning blood.*

*Our desperate state through sin declare,
And speak our sins forgiven ;
By perfect holiness prepare,
And take us up to heaven.¹*

¹ Methodist Hymn Book, 1933 Ed., No. 347.

Having taken note that the first part of the service is preparatory this would seem the right point at which to consider the private preparation of the individual communicant.¹ This private preparation in its turn is caught up into the common action of the service by the opening words of the Lord's Prayer with which the service of Holy Communion begins.

On this point there are many masters of the devotional life who can be consulted. Amongst them are several all too little known spiritual guides who deserve attention not least because their whole approach to the Sacrament of our redemption was based upon an Evangelical understanding of what is there declared. One of the most helpful of these teachers is Edward Bickersteth, to whom reference has already been made. Writing on preparation for the Lord's Supper he says:

"It is very desirable not to enter on any spiritual service with a careless and heedless mind: and the more solemn the duty is, the more needful and desirable is a due preparation for it. The common decencies of life teach men that, when invited to the table of a monarch . . . they should appear with suitable marks of respect, and so behave as may best please and honour those who have invited them. Much more when invited to the nearest communion with the King of Kings, should Christians seek so to act as may please Him."²

The reminder of the proper courtesies of life and the place of dignity in human relationships is even more necessary for our own day than it was when Bickersteth wrote. If,

¹ Concern for the right preparation by the individual Christian has been a conspicuous characteristic of every revival of eucharistic worship, and was notably so in that new emphasis upon the Holy Communion which was so remarkable an expression of the Evangelical Revival, within the Church of England. Later it was no less truly a characteristic of the Oxford Movement. In the Church of Scotland it has by long tradition played a most significant part, as it also has amongst the Methodists. In the Church of Rome the rule of Sacramental confession before Communion bears witness to the same emphasis. It can hardly be doubted that wherever the liturgical movement of our own day gathers influence there will be found a similar concern.

² Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, Ch. IX., p. 89. 1822.

as we rightly believe, the Sacrament should be the standard of all our service, and of each of our relationships, then from our courtesy to God will follow courtesy to man made in the image of God. We live at a moment when the pressures of economic life and political circumstance are all tending towards "the annihilation of man" as a person, the reducing of him to a unit and a cog in the machine. Totalitarianism is everywhere in the ascendant, and the decay within our own nation is far further advanced than most of us are willing to admit. But humanism cannot save us. First we must give worth to God, and from that we shall be able to give right worship to our fellow men and women.

Such preparation, then, is a duty, and for this a fixed time should be set apart before the service. Bickersteth himself aimed always to set apart a period on Saturday evening, but each individual must choose his own time, bearing in mind the wise caution of a seventeenth-century divine, Dr. Owen, quoted by Bickersteth with obvious approval :

"When we assign so long a time as wearies our spirits; and observe the time, because of the time, it is bodily exercise, and when the vigour of our spirits is gone it is not a sacrifice in which God delights. Prudence is here required."¹

Yet the same Dr. Owen is quoted as saying :

"Let not the time allotted be so short, as to be unmeet for going through the duty effectually. Men may be ready to turn their private prayers into a few ejaculations, and going in or out of a room, may serve them for preparation for the most solemn ordinance. This has lost us the power, the glory and the beauty of our profession, which are greatest and brightest when Christians are most exact in preparation for their duties."²

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *op. cit.*, p. 161

² Edward Bickersteth, *op. cit.*, p. 161

The language may be archaic, but the advice is relevant to our preparation to-day.

Bickersteth then deals with the material for the preparation. Here he is a far better guide than the great mass of little books of preparation common to-day, many of which lay all their stress on lists of sins which are to be studied, thereby wholly turning the attention of the Christian in upon himself. Rather Bickersteth turns the Christian straight to the Bible, and the testing of the Bible is conducted not as an inventory in detail but as the setting of a standard as to the dispositions of the personality. If you would measure the quality of your penitence, says Bickersteth, study Psalm 51. Set your faith in the light of Hebrews 11: your gratitude for God's goodness by Psalm 103: your general attitude towards God by Psalms 63 and 84: your practice of Christian love by 1 Corinthians 13. With all this behind you he would suggest a meditation on St. John 6, verses 25 to the end.¹

The fundamental principle behind such preparation, exacting though it be, is that it lifts the heart and mind away from the contemplation of the self to the vision of God and His victory, and then in the light of that vision the individual is bidden to come humbly to the place where that victory can be made effective for the whole of his life and personality. So it is that Bickersteth quotes Cranmer with effect:

"And this faith God works inwardly in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, and confirms the same outwardly to our ears, by the hearing of His word, and to our other senses by the eating and drinking of the Sacramental bread and wine in His Holy Supper."²

Such preparation must obviously be conducted in a spirit of prayer, and this is Bickersteth's next important point. Preparation is not a conversation with oneself, it is a conversation with God, and the more we listen to God and the

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Companion to the Holy Communion*, pp. 21 ff.

² Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, quoted p. 32.

less we speak ourselves the better. So often preparation for Holy Communion takes the form of an endless inquisition of the self by the self, and one never sees oneself as one really is. This vision, the vision that is most truly humbling, comes as a by-product of the vision of God.

It will have been seen from the choice of passages suggested for meditation how real a part gratitude to God and the contemplation of his mercies and his victories should play in such preparation. Experience does certainly endorse this counsel. How much of the remorse that Christians feel for sin is really nothing more than exasperation with themselves at having fallen short of the standard they had set. Such remorse, miscalled penitence, is only a subtle form of that very pride which caused the sin. It may be doubted if any contemplation of our own sin in the moment of conviction and remorse wholly fails of this self-centredness. But it is different if the mind has been engaged upon the mercies of God and the heart has been lifted with gratitude for his goodness. The transition from that meditation to the consideration of one's own ingratitude and betrayals brings that "sorrow" which Paul says "works repentance to salvation" (2 Cor. 7: 10).

Two other practical suggestions may be noted. Bickersteth writes of the value of "occasionally reducing to writing the results of this self-examination." The operative word is "occasionally" so that there may be no question of routine. Many have found this far more effective than the dangerously mechanical habit of placing a pencil mark against a list of "vices" or "virtues" comprehensively set forth in a manual of devotion. The personal form of such recording is a reminder from one occasion to another of words actually spoken to one by God himself, suggested during the preparation by the Holy Spirit.

Bickersteth has one further point which does not properly refer to private preparation but is a reminder of a long-established Christian tradition to which further reference will be made in another chapter. He writes:

"A devout attendance on the previous services, public worship, singing the praises of God, and hearing His Gospel, are peculiarly calculated to prepare us for the more solemn act of devotion which succeeds."¹

At least this is a reminder of the fact that the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the Holy Communion is a link with the old "common prayer" shared in by the whole congregation, which formed a distinctive part of early Christian worship.²

So, the private preparation ended, we come to the common preparation which we make together with our fellow worshippers. As we have seen the penitential note is contained within a clear assertion of the divine sovereignty, and, by implication, of the divine victory.

The Collect for purity breathes a spirit of complete trust which carries us at once beyond any mere preoccupation with sin to the purpose of our worship which is not forgiveness but the sharing in the victory "That we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy name." Once again Charles Wesley puts with rare insight the inner meaning of this Collect in his short hymn:

*Come, Thou everlasting Spirit,
Bring to every thankful mind
All the Saviour's dying merit,
All His sufferings for mankind:*

*True Recorder of His passion,
Now the living faith impart,
Now reveal His great salvation,
Preach His Gospel to our heart.*

*Come, Thou Witness of His dying;
Come Remembrancer divine,
Let us feel Thy power, applying
Christ to every soul, and mine.³*

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Companion to the Holy Communion*, p. 65.

² Brilioth, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³ *Methodist Hymn Book*, 1933 Ed., No. 765.

Our service puts the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the proper place at the very beginning of the worship, and his power is invoked directly upon the worshippers themselves. We remember the words of our Lord about the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it into you" (St. John 16: 14). It is peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit to make us aware of our Lord. Through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to be conscious of our Lord's own presence. It is with this thought in mind that Bickersteth, in one of his private prayers before the service, includes these words:

"O give me, and all of us now assembled with one accord in this place, grace to believe and love. Give us a calm and tranquil mind; let us set the Lord before us, and be humbled in his presence, and be cheered with His love. So manifest Thyself to us, that we may have a happy experience that our Saviour is in the midst of us; may it be a season of near and close communion with Thee and with each other; may great grace be upon us, and thus may we all enjoy together the communion of Thy body and blood . . ."¹

As he says elsewhere:

"The whole service is peculiarly calculated to strengthen our faith in Christ, the only Saviour . . . though invisible to the eye of sense, the eye of faith can behold Him as the present and the real Head of the family: not only coming in like the King in the marriage supper, to see the guests, but, though unseen, presiding over all who assemble around His table, and blessing them according to their wants."²

Here is an important insight. The real presence of Christ consists in the fact that He is the host at His supper. He is the celebrant. He is in the midst as surely as in the Upper Room on the night that He was betrayed.

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Companion to the Holy Communion*, p. 77.

² Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 133.

Dr. Daniel Wilson, later to become Bishop of Calcutta, wrote, while still vicar of Islington, a book for young communicants to help them in their preparation for Holy Communion.¹ In the course of his argument he makes two statements which have a direct bearing upon our corporate preparation. In the first place he says, "The Sacrament is a solemn declaration of our allegiance to Christ,"² and then later on he adds, "There takes place at the Lord's table that peculiar union with Christ which no other means of grace is designed to convey."³ Our preparation, then, is towards a more effective witness of allegiance, and the strength of this is seen to be in that "peculiar union with Christ" which is at once unity with Himself and also unity with His other disciples. It is this goal and this possibility to which the Collect for purity introduces us, and about which the succeeding part of the service is concerned.

The word purity is apt to be interpreted in a very restricted sense. It should be clear, therefore, that the word here used as the title for this opening Collect refers to that attitude of personality which we call "single-mindedness," what our Lord meant when he said to His disciples "seek ye first the Kingdom of God." Our hearts and minds are cluttered up with secondary loyalties that so easily obscure our supreme allegiance, and so it is that we pray "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts."

The service now goes forward to the recital of the Commandments, the first of which is concerned with the primary loyalty of the creature to his creator. The thought throughout is concerned with our allegiance. The great advantage of the full recitation of the Ten Commandments over the commonly-used summary is that in the setting of a service of worship the phrases "love of God" and "love your neighbour" too easily lack any decisive point of application. The stark challenges of the moral law as outlined in the Ten Commandments remind us that the

¹ Daniel Wilson, *A Plain and Affectionate Address to Young Persons Previous to their Receiving the Lord's Supper*.

² Daniel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 6

³ Daniel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 19

allegiance of a single mind is not a matter of mystic visions but of ordinary conduct.

In the Ten Commandments the whole of our working week comes under review. At a later stage in the service there will be set upon the Holy Table the "Oblations" of the congregation. In the earliest days of the Church's worship, as to-day frequently overseas, offerings were not only in money but also in kind. From the offerings in kind were taken the bread and wine needed for the service. A lingering survival of this ancient tradition remains in the fact that it is still the responsibility of the churchwardens, as representing the people, to see that the elements of bread and wine are provided. In symbolic form, then, the fruits of our labours in the working week are laid upon the Holy Table. Because the service is full of symbolism it is important that we should make the right connections in our own thinking about it, and not dismiss such details as of small moment. Just as the Ten Commandments compel us to face the realities of daily living, so the bread and the wine on the Holy Table remind us that we bring that daily living, however sin-stained, to God as our sacrifice. It is part of what we offer when, strengthened by the body and blood of Christ shared in the Sacrament we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a "lively sacrifice." How important, then, that our working week shall conform to the standards of God. How inevitable, when those Commandments are interpreted according to the canons laid down by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, that we should pray "Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee."

It cannot be over-emphasised that in coming into the church in order to share in the Sacrament we are not coming out of the world, escaping from the world. Rather we are coming face to face with the world, and seeing it for what it really is, the place in which we have to prove our allegiance to God, and where we either betray Him or are instruments of His victory. The world is given its proper value. Here is no dismissal of the world as a vale of tears, but its appraisal as a vale of soul-making. Here is

no misunderstanding of it as wholly evil, but rather the acknowledgment of it as a sphere of Christ's Kingship. Here it is possible, as loyal disciples, to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And because that dictum of our Lord's was no evasion but a challenge, we shall from our hearts pray, "Lord have mercy upon us."

It is with singular, though undesigned, appropriateness that in 1662 the revisers of the Prayer Book brought in at this point the prayer for the King which in the earlier Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 had followed the Collect for the day. Its appropriateness in its present position derives from the nature of the recital of the Commandments as interpreted above, and is enhanced by the symbolic significance of the King. In neither of the Collects is the attention focused solely on the King as an individual who needs our prayers, though consideration for the great office he holds will ensure that we remember the man and his family. But the King is the symbol of the nation, and indeed in our present case the effective symbol of the unity of the whole commonwealth. That is to say in this prayer we are reminded of that actual social, political and economic framework within which our immediate lives and through which our nation, under God's guidance, can serve God's purpose in the world.

The disciple who is aware of the recent enormous increase in the scope of the State's authority, and the vast development of its power for enforcing that authority to-day, will realise that in this prayer he finds himself at one of the great points of tension in the history of the Christian faith, the point where Church and State meet. All the freedoms of the subject come before our eyes here, and particularly freedom of religion. If we possess any historical imagination at all our prayer for the King will be charged with an emotion that finds its source in the Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, Tiberius being that Caesar the loss of whose friendship Pilate could not risk; which reads again the words of Paul to the Romans in Chapter 13 feeling with him the real authority

of Caesar ; but which also remembers Peter "honouring the King" from a catacomb, and preparing his disciples for "the fiery trial which is to try you"; and which, with the writer of the Apocalypse, salutes the Lord as "the Prince of the Kings of the earth" although the writer was in the salt mines of Patmos, where those Kings had sent him, because "of the testimony of Jesus Christ"; and the mind will travel down history conscious of the "noble army of martyrs" in every age who have been willing at all costs to assert what, for them, were "the crown rights of the Redeemer."

That may all seem far fetched, but it makes better sense of the collect for the King, and challenges us more seriously to prove the strange victory of the King of Kings than any other interpretation. And, in addition, it justifies the retention of this collect and its regular use in its present position.

From this point in the service we are bidden for our learning to hear the Word of God, and we may reasonably follow our understanding of the service so far by seeking to find in the Epistle for the day Apostolic counsel as to how we shall pursue single-mindedness, while in the Gospel we shall listen to the words, or recall the acts, of our Lord Himself.

Then follows the Creed, a great act of faith that the victory of the Christ crucified-risen through which God overcame sin, death and the powers of evil can be appropriated by, and made effective in the life of each disciple, and corporately in the Church to the end that "the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

In this service the Creed is indeed a hymn of triumph, providing incidentally a most valuable moment of emotional release within a movement of worship whose dominant tone in this preparatory part is understandably penitential. Ideally, this Creed should be sung by the whole congregation, and there are a number of truly worthy and glorious settings for it. But even when it is said there is no excuse for the almost inaudible muttering of the average congregation. Rather should we be able to hear the drums of the Faith beating out their declaration of loyalty,

trust and obedience. The apathetic fashion in which it is commonly recited is a commentary on the lack of depth in our allegiance.

Daniel Wilson has a fine passage describing the whole service of Holy Communion which is particularly apposite to the Creed and its significance in the act of worship. He writes :

“ It is our Eucharist, our festival of praise and triumph. The Passover to which it succeeds, was a feast in grateful commemoration of the redemption of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The Lord's Supper is a thanksgiving for our spiritual redemption from the slavery of sin : it is a feast in memory of the triumphs of Christ. We are then called to a sacrifice of praise for the victory which our Lord has obtained over all our enemies and for the high powers with which He is in consequence invested ; we celebrate His grace, as ‘ having spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the Cross ’ (Col. 2 : 15). One design of this Sacrament is that we should surround His table with joyful hearts, and exult with grateful thanksgivings in Christ our Saviour.”¹

The Creed is a hymn of triumph, and even considered as an act of faith it is part of the victory which overcomes the world.

It is at this point in our service that the Prayer Book makes provision for a sermon : in fact here is the only provision for a sermon which our Prayer Book makes. It is on every ground unfortunate that the breaking of the word has become divorced from the breaking of the bread. The two go properly together. Either without the other fails of its full intent, falls short of all the possibilities offered by the service.²

There comes at this point in the service a definite break in the movement of worship. Where the service of Morning Prayer has immediately preceded the Sacrament there will be those who at this point will leave the church, either

¹ Daniel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 5

² Fuller treatment of this point will be found in Chapter VIII.

having already communicated or not desiring to do so. At any celebration this is the point at which notices, when there are such, will be given out. It is now that the alms of the congregation are properly collected and their oblations, as noted above, are laid upon the Holy Table. But there is no reason why the individual communicant should feel that this pause in the service is either a waste of time or without meaning. Indeed, it provides one of those very valuable moments for recollection, and more particularly for bringing into the front of the mind the names of particular persons to whom the communicant is tied by bonds of relationship and affection or by common duty. It is a practice of proved value to decide before the service which particular persons and causes are to be remembered before God. This is the point in the service when such can be set in array and kept deliberately in mind through all that follows.

These particular arrangements are then caught up into the common action of prayer with the words, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth." This great act of intercession carries on the thought of community which has already permeated the service, but there is now a new note. Whereas so far we have been contemplating ourselves in the world and even in the Creed thanking God for the possibility of victory in the world, our attention now begins to concentrate on the declaratory words and acts by which we know the victory as a fact, and share in it. We are now committed men and women, our money and our bread and wine, symbols of all that is most sordid and most sanctified in our lives have been offered to God for His service. Already in desire we stand on God's side of the human conflict. In due course, because we are, in fact, on His side, we shall be able to share in Christ's own intercession for the world, and be ourselves part of the prayer and part of the answer to the prayer. But that is not yet. First we must see ourselves consciously as part of that particular community which belongs to God in the sacrificial sense of being set apart for service, the service of reconciling the world to God, the realising

of the victory of Calvary.¹ So our prayers ascend for the Church of Christ, praying for it, and for ourselves within it, that integrity of spirit and life which is "truth, unity and concord;" so we include Caesar wherever he acknowledges the over-ruling claims of Christ. Here is no national limitation, though the nation is recognised as properly belonging to the Kingdom of Christ. "All Christian Kings, Princes and Governors," are remembered, though in private duty bound we think of our own King, our Parliament, local Government and the whole administration of our common life. Likewise, our prayer for the Church is for the whole Church, though by tradition we are again, as in private duty bound, led to remember the Archbishop of our province and the Bishop of our diocese. All Christian men and women are here held in our prayer, with a sidelong look at ourselves in the congregation as part of a great company, and then especially we ask "comfort and succour" for all who are in need. Thought travels out beyond the community of Christ to embrace all those whose supreme need is the knowledge of His love and grace. On this missionary note our imaginations are carried up to that great multitude that no man can number, in whom the conflict of the Church militant is seen as the conquest of the Church triumphant.

But how can we fulfil the intention of this prayer and ourselves, in due course "following their good examples" become "partakers" of the "heavenly Kingdom?" It is obviously the intention of the service to prepare us for the only fitting climax of any consideration of our discipleship and of the failures in our loyalty and our many betrayals, which is the humble confession of our sins to God and the request for forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As a preparation for this confession and abolition, and all that follows, the Prayer Book here inserts three exhortations which deserve more frequent public use, and certainly merit frequent private reading in preparation for the service.

¹For a full treatment of the great importance of the offertory cf. Dix, *op. cit.* pp. 110-123, and in particular p. 120—"The truth is that offertory and consecration and communion are so intricately connected as parts of a single action that it is exceedingly difficult to express their meaning separately.

The main burden of these exhortations may be briefly summarised in a note which Bishop Thomas Wilson, the eighteenth century Bishop of Sodor and Man, inserts at this point in his *A Short and Plain Instruction for the Better Understanding of the Lord's Supper*. He writes in the margin against one of these exhortations :

“ You will not easily fall into a state of *sin* and *security* being so often put in mind of the danger of going carelessly and unprepared.”¹

The words *sin* and *security* are printed in italics in the original. They are an interesting reminder of the fact that *security* has a bad meaning. It means literally to be without care, in the sense of being self-contained and independent of all outside help. It is thus the particular condition of the ungodly, who is so proud “ that he careth not for God : neither is God in all his thoughts ” (Psa. 10 : 4, P.B.V), and of all who need Paul's warning “ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall ” (1 Cor. 10 : 12). Such reflections are not wholly inappropriate for the days in which we live.

The first of these exhortations also contains our Church's declared opinion on the subject of confession. The subject of confession or the opening of grief, to some “ discreet and learned Minister of God's Word . . . that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice,” has become the centre of bitter controversy and misunderstanding. The practice has, no doubt, been grossly abused. That does not, however, say anything about its use. The principle of the Prayer Book has been well epitomised in the words applied to the use of confession, “ None must, all may, some should.” A great deal of the bitterness raised by this question has followed from the quite erroneous idea that there is only one way in which confessions can be heard, with the assumption that all that is understood by the confessional in the Church of Rome is involved, together

¹ Thomas Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

with Roman ideas of penance. What is needed is the much clearer formulation of existing Evangelical practice in which, as the Exhortation has it, "the ministry of God's holy Word" is the instrument through which the sinner receives benefit of absolution. To this no sort of exception can be taken on any Evangelical principle, and after this form it has been, in fact, the common practice of Evangelical pastors of souls as well as of evangelists. They may not have called it confession, but that, in fact, is what it is. The form of service for the visitation of the sick provides a simple formula which can be used. After confession has been made the Evangelical will follow the proposal of the Exhortation, and open the Word of God so that the penitent may there receive the benefit of absolution. The absolution in the form found in the service for the visitation of the sick is a confirmatory declaration, very necessary, in point of fact, for those who by temperament are predisposed to scruples and over-conscientiousness. Those who suffer from sickness of the body are not the *only* persons who feel the burden of sin.

Immediately before the general confession comes the Invitation which sums up the whole of the penitential preparation so far. The confession itself is uncompromisingly concerned with sin as the great act of refusal to God and disobedience of His will. This is the supreme evil of sin, and all else is derived from it. In confessing our sin to God we do, if we are sincere, also lay before Him all the subsidiary results of sin that involve our fellow men, above all our fellow Christians, but for which it is not possible to secure their forgiveness. There is no human priest "unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid." No man can really forgive his fellow man, for no man can make an atonement. The full ramifications of even one evil action are beyond any human retrieving. All this is implicit in the sternly solemn words of the confession. But in the Invitation we are reminded that love of neighbour and the life of charity is a divine command also. All our sins against that are explicitly sins against our fellows, too, and must be

repented of. Then, also, these are confessed in the great prayer that follows. For the man or woman who has carefully prepared for the service and who has entered consciously into all that has followed upon the collect for purity the general confession cannot but be a deeply moving prayer coming from the very depths of the heart. Looking forward, as such a one must be, to the supreme moment of the service, he or she is tragically aware of the betrayals that have occurred since the last Communion. In the general confession is the confession of defeat. The Absolution is the declaration of a victory won through Jesus Christ our Lord: the declaration of a victory that is to be won as God confirms and strengthens us "in all goodness": the declaration of a victory now offered and shared—"pardon and deliver you from all your sins."

The benefit of absolution is then confirmed to us by the words of Scripture known as "The comfortable words." Bickersteth has this comment on their position here,

"Man's words cannot of themselves speak peace to the troubled conscience: and therefore the Minister's declaration of forgiveness is confirmed by these well-chosen passages of Scripture."¹

Bishop Thomas Wilson, already quoted, adds this important comment for the guidance of the Celebrant:

"These most comfortable words should always be read with great deliberation, that the people may have time to reflect upon them; and to apply them every one to the comfort of his own soul; and to prevent all unreasonable fears and doubts of God's gracious pardon and acceptance."²

So the Preparation brings us to the point where, assured of the divine victory, we can go on into the holy of holies of Christian worship, to that place at which Time is caught

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 215.

² Thomas Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

up in Eternity and the victory of the past and the victory of the future are realised and enjoyed as a present experience. The whole movement of the worship changes. As forgiven men and women we hear the call,

“Lift up your hearts,”

and with something of the first thrill of the age to come we reply,

“We lift them up unto the Lord.”

V

THE ADORATION

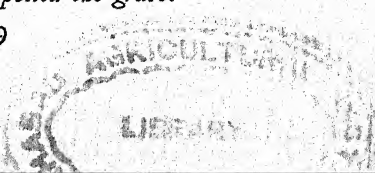
THE victory of Christ crucified-risen is the central theme of Christian worship, and it is this note of triumph which finds expression in that brief section of the service introduced by the words "Lift up your hearts," and closed with the words in which the whole congregation joins as a climax of praise and adoration,

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,
heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord most High."

In the structure of the service this short section is matched on the other side of the acts of declaration, communion, and sacrifice by the "Gloria in Excelsis" in which again we hear the angels sing and the whole created universe praising God. Here, then, it is possible to enjoy the proportions of this climax of our worship to which all the long preparation has been directed. In itself it is a gem beautifully cut, and a precious contribution to the worship of the Universal Church. But unless the Celebrant is careful, and his people instructed, the wealth of meaning and the possibilities for worship may easily be lost. This chapter attempts to unfold some of the treasure awaiting our use in that burst of praise which precedes the central action.

An anonymous fifth century hymn translated by Bishop James Russell Woodford gives a key to our appreciation of what awaits us here.

*"Christ, above all glory seated!
King triumphant, strong to save!
Dying, Thou hast death defeated;
Buried, Thou hast spoiled the grave."*



*Thou art gone where now is given,
What no mortal might could gain,
On the eternal throne of heaven,
In Thy Father's power to reign.*

*There Thy Kingdoms all adore Thee,
Heaven above and earth below ;
While the depths of hell before Thee
Trembling and defeated bow. **

*We, O Lord, with hearts adoring,
Follow Thee above the sky ;
Hear our prayers Thy grace imploring,
Lift our souls to Thee on high.*

*So when Thou again in glory
On the clouds of heaven shalt shine,
We Thy flock may stand before Thee,
Owned for evermore as Thine.*

*Hail ! all hail ! In Thee confiding,
Jesus, Thee shall all adore,
In Thy Father's might abiding
With one Spirit evermore ! ”¹*

The early Church was so conscious of the victory won on Calvary that it never tired of portraying the reign of the Victor Christ crucified-risen, as extending over all created nature, and indeed over all time past, present and future. The unlimited nature of the victory lies as much behind Paul's vision of nature waiting with "earnest expectation . . . for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8 : 19) that epiphany which will crown history, as it does behind the conviction that the victory is retrospective, a conviction embodied in the doctrine of the descent into hell.

The early liturgies are not slow to express this in their worship. In some, such as the Clementine, this part of

¹ Hymns arranged for Sundays and Holy Days, Woodford 1852.

their worship¹ alone, in which the victory of the Christ is seen as the seal of God's creative purpose in both nature and history, would occupy several pages in one of our Prayer Books. Nowhere, perhaps, does our worship, for all its balance, compare less favourably with that of earlier centuries than in the fact that what once occupied pages is with us compressed into the words "heaven and earth are full of thy glory." It is the more important, therefore, that we shall frequently meditate on this theme, and by every means in our power deepen our awareness of all nature as the scene not only of God's creative purpose but also of His redemptive activity. It is not only we, but all creation, of whom it is true that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3 : 2). As we shall reflect his likeness, so in its own way will the whole created order. It is a profound Biblical conviction that the "new heaven and the new earth" is the counterpart in the universe of nature of the new birth in the heart of man.

Here, then, is the place where beauty is properly caught up into our worship as in its own right a vehicle of the divine victory no less sure than the integrity of mind which is truth and the moral order which is goodness. Colour and form and music which are the vehicles of beauty are seen as consecrated to the praise and the glory of God. And that consecration, as certainly as everything else that is consecrated in the actual service of worship, has its terms of reference in the world of human activity. If beauty is a vehicle of the divine, then ugliness, wherever it is found, is a betrayal of God. The ugly building, the slum, the defacement of the roadside with hoardings, slovenliness and carelessness in workmanship whether it be carving or type-writing or machine welding or bricklaying, the sacrifice of everything to utility, all this is a betrayal of God, and it kills the soul of man. To lift up our hearts to God and to join in the "Sanctus" is to commit ourselves to taking

¹ Note. The Clementine Liturgy may never have been used as an actual rite, but even as a liturgical meditation its emphasis is significant.

our part in making this earth full of God's glory, allowing his victory to be realised through us, or it is a form of words signifying, at the best, a vacuum of the soul, at the worst blasphemy.

Once we see the relevance of all this to our every day life we are free to approach the structure of our worship and to consider it objectively. We shall not be hurried into a feverish cult of colour, or imagine that music is the only vehicle of praise. Because our life and work is expressing beauty we shall not have to satisfy a starvation of the soul by making worship gaudy, nor shall we, on the other hand, be afraid to use beauty as a vehicle of adoration. Understanding the order of our worship, we shall see in it a beauty of form whose lineaments are descried most clearly in simplicity, a beauty which can easily be lost to view in the midst of too much distraction. But this we shall insist upon, that as far as lies in our power only the best shall be offered to God in our services of worship. And in worship, as in life, we shall remember that it is attention to detail that counts. With insight Evelyn Underhill reminds us :

*I come in the little things,
Saith the Lord :*

.....
Till by such art

*I shall achieve My Immemorial Plan,
Pass the low lintel of the human heart.¹*

Was not the victory of our Lord as surely demonstrated in His wondrous attention to detail as in His majestic patience and long suffering? The strange beauty of the Passion of our Lord brings the tears to our eyes most certainly at the points when in touching the individual life, he never loses its detail in the wide drama of His great enterprise. Malchus is healed : Peter is enveloped in a look of love : the sorrowing mother and the heart-broken friend are encouraged : the dying thief is assured : you and I can

¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Immanence*, from the volume so entitled.

say "The Son of God loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."

So the strange victory achieves its end. It is in the spirit of the "Sanctus" that we are shown in that poem already quoted the victory in nature as well as in human nature:

*I come in the little things,
Saith the Lord :
Not borne on morning wings
Of majesty, but I have set My Feet
Amidst the delicate and bladed wheat
That springs triumphant in the furrowed sod.
There do I dwell, in weakness and in power ;
Not broken or divided, saith our God !
In your strait garden plot I come to flower :
About your porch My Vine
Meek, fruitful, doth entwine ;
Waits, at the threshold, Love's appointed hour.*

But if this part of our worship shows the victory as operating in the whole realm of created nature, it is no less instinct with the conviction that death itself is swallowed up in victory. The worship here is linked with that of "Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven." Once again the stern compression involved in the design of our service conceals from the uninstructed what in earlier liturgies was made explicit. "All the company of heaven" embraces all who have "departed in the Lord." In the early liturgies the "faithful departed" were actually mentioned by name, the reading of the names at one time being part of the great prayer of intercession which formed part of the long central prayer of the service. Later the names were read out after the offertory, and it is probable that the words in the Prayer for the Church Militant "We also bless thy holy name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear . . ." are a direct legacy of the practice of reciting immediately after the offertory the names of those departed.

This, at any rate, is certain that the Church of the New

Testament and the Church which still lived near in time to the initial impression made by the triumph of Christ crucified-risen believed that the communion of the saints did really transcend the barriers of death. To depart this life was to be with Christ. And yet to live was to be in Christ. What difference, then, did death make? Daniel Wilson answers :

“Even the King of terrors yields to the Cross of Christ. . . . We may (in the Sacrament) view death deprived of its sting, robbed of its power, yea, quite altered in its property. The body and blood of Christ offered up to God, have taken away the gloom of death, and made it the gate of everlasting life.”¹

The long argument of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15, shows that for Paul death had been robbed of all its terrors by the victory of Christ. From being a dread evil, the last enemy, the king of terrors, death becomes a natural process by which “this corruptible must put on incorruption.” and the victory over death is the same three-fold victory that is won over sin.

“He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (*future*). For he hath put all things under his feet (*past*) . . . Death is swallowed up in victory (*present*).” (1 Cor. 15 : 25-27, 54).

The early Christians faced death themselves, and the bereavement that came in the death of those they loved with the song of triumph—“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory (*over death as well as sin*) through Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 15 : 57).

Like everything else when seen in the light of the three-fold victory of Christ crucified-risen the communion of the saints became a fellowship which was not broken by death. For the Christians of the New Testament our problems

¹ Daniel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

about praying for the dead were non-existent. The victory had been won. Sin and death and the powers of evil had been worsted, and would finally be shown as abolished. To pray for the dead with such a creed was not to plead for pardon because the life everlasting and the forgiveness of sins, both the fruit of fellowship with Christ crucified-risen, were one and the same thing, and prayer could not seek what was already possessed. Rather it was to pray *with* them, to share consciously *with* them that fellowship "with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ" which is the essence of eternal life. In the early Eucharist when the victory was declared, apprehended and shared the "departed in Christ" were realised as present. There could be no anxiety about them. What we call prayer for them is on such a showing, the affectionate holding of them by the hand as they with us bathe in the river of the love of God. It is prayer, praise and worship *with* them. So we can say that when, having them in mind, we lift up our desires to God in prayer, then every desire of ours to love God better is a prayer for them to do so too, and in that exercise we can surely believe that there is room for infinite growth "on the other side." And if we believe with Paul that the resurrection of the body is the effective continuation of personality beyond death; then our "dead" who are alive again, in their desiring to grow in love for their Saviour, now more fully apprehended, and in their love for us, must hold us within the compass of their desire: "so the whole earth," and heaven, too, "is bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

From all the foregoing meditation and communion, justified as it is by the Gospel, by the New Testament, and by the testimony of the Church's worship down the centuries, it is evident that we can share in that victory over death which it is partly the design of this service to set before us.

Always, however, our service holds us firmly to the central fact that the victory is the victory of God, won in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord, crucified-risen. And so it is that the Church's Year, methodically setting

before us the whole Gospel in the "Epistles" and "Gospels" here by "proper prefaces" underlines that fact. We are reminded by the great sequence of Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Whitsuntide culminating on Trinity Sunday, that he who was born in Bethlehem, and whose crucifixion and resurrection is the victory "taking away sin" and "destroying death," is, in very fact, God himself: "for that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality."

Through these proper prefaces at this point in our service we fix our thoughts, as old Daniel Wilson would say, on:

"Not only the Cross and sufferings of our Saviour, but on his resurrection, ascension and intercession at the right hand of God. . . . we review the Lord of Glory as well as the Man of sorrows."¹

¹ Daniel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

VI

MEMORIAL—COMMUNION—SACRIFICE

ONE of the greatest needs of the soul is silence. One of the most valuable forms of silence, difficult to achieve, infinitely worth achieving, is corporate silence. One of the major defects of our public worship is that we know so little of the liturgical use of silence. Now a real opportunity for such silence, unimpaired by any movement whatever, can be provided at the moment when, the "Sanctus" having been concluded, both celebrant and the people are humbly kneeling.

Consider again how the "Sanctus" sums up the worship of heaven and of earth, of the Church triumphant with all the angelic hosts and of the Church militant. God victorious over all is worshipped in His holiness. That holiness is seen to involve all history and all created nature. The Lord is, indeed, in His holy temple, and it is right that there should be silence before him. It is a legitimate interpretation of the Apocalypse to view it as presenting us with a mighty pageant of worship in which our thoughts are alternately, as in all worship, directed Godward and then manward. Thus viewed the first three chapters introduce us to the Church which is to be instructed in its worship. The introduction being finished, we gaze through the opened door into the court of heaven, and there see a throne. The sound that breaks upon our ears in this vision is the sound of voices singing

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4 : 8).

As our eyes become adjusted to the perspectives of eternity we see

“in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev. 5 : 6).

There follows the awesome interpretation of history as being the scene of the judgments of the God who is holy—there flashes before our eyes the kaleidoscope of power-politics, war, famine, pestilence, crisis mounting upon crisis, and within this setting the Christian Church (Chapter 6) : but the purpose of judgment itself is love, and there ensues the vision of the great multitude that no man can number standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Rev. 7 : 9). Vision-like all this is sensed instantaneously, so that the opening of the seventh seal of woe (Rev. 8 : 1) parallels the vision of redeemed humanity serving God “day and night in his temple” (Rev. 7 : 15). The chanting of the “Sanctus” is still the background of the worship, and then, as Bishop Stephen Neill has finely expressed it :

“We have the greatest *non-sequitur* in literature ; we expect the thunder of doomsday, and are given ‘silence in heaven for the space of half an hour’.”¹

Let us then cultivate this supreme moment for silence, pressing it upon the clergy of our acquaintance, and meantime practising the silence of the heart which, with training and with the due concentration of the mind, can insulate the body even from waves of sound. For this is a very precious moment of worship, and without it we shall lose something of that direct apprehension of awe which is indispensable for adoration.

Furthermore, this is the appropriate moment for silence in an act of worship which is Evangelical in expression. Very early in the history of Christian worship a sense of dread was introduced into the liturgy. The worshippers, we are told, were “full of fear and dread” while they offered “this fearful and unbloody sacrifice,”² We are not here concerned to trace how it was that a service whose

¹ S. C. Neill, *How Readest Thou?*, p. 217.

² See *The Liturgy of St. James*, c. A.D. 330.

predominant notes were those of thanksgiving and prayer came to change its character so drastically. It is sufficient to notice that the means by which this was achieved was "liturgical silence." But this "liturgical silence" was observed not as a corporate act of silence shared by celebrant and worshippers, but took the form of the recital of the most solemn portions of the eucharistic prayers either in complete silence or in an undertone so low as to be merely a murmur of sound which only became coherent for the worshippers at one or two moments, and particularly at the close, so that they might know when to say "Amen." In our own day in the Church of Rome the entire canon of the Mass, with the exception of two clauses, is recited inaudibly.

Such an interpretation of liturgical silence overthrows the whole meaning of this service as we understand it. But, as in other matters, the abuse of a good thing is only a warning and not a prevention of its proper use.

Very fittingly this time of silent worship is closed by an act of deep humility known as the "prayer of humble access." Coming straight from our thought of God in His holiness and the absolute demand which that holiness makes on man, on his life as well as on his worship, on his life because it is his worship, we know that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

*O Jesus, full of truth and grace,
More full of grace than I of sin,
Yet once again I seek Thy face ;
Open thine arms, and take me in,
And freely my backslidings heal,
And love the faithless sinner still.¹*

That is the individual point of reference in the opening words of this prayer. Remembering that our worship is corporate, and not just individual, we can find food for thought in the original source of these words, Daniel 9 : 18 :

¹ Charles Wesley. *Methodist Hymn Book*, 1933 Ed., No. 346.

"O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies."

In the face of absolute demand we know that we are not worthy even to think that we

"should share the crumbs broke at the feast,"¹

but here we find not only absolute demand but also final succour from that same Lord

"whose property is always to have mercy."

In anticipation we claim the pledges of His grace, and pray that the manner of our partaking may prove His victory over those evil powers which would hold us captive, body and soul. This is that "drawing near by faith" to which we have already been summoned in the Invitation, which faith itself is the gift of grace.

And so we approach those sacred moments towards which the whole act of corporate worship so far has been directed, and to which our own private preparation has looked forward. It is of great importance that we shall understand that the prayer called the prayer of consecration, the Communion and the sacrifice of praise and life which follows are all part of the same action. In them are represented to our minds by word, to our eyes by action, to our other senses by touch and taste that threefold declaration of His victory which our Lord made to His disciples when on the night that He was betrayed He

"took Bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise after supper he took

¹ John Masefield, *The Everlasting Mercy*.

the Cup ; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this ; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins : Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

It is fundamental to the true Evangelical appreciation of the Holy Communion to realise that the solemn words above do not by themselves alone constitute the Sacrament. The Sacrament is fulfilled only with the act of Communion and with the prayer of oblation which follows. Only then is the cycle of the Upper Room complete. Only then can we claim that by faith¹ we have heard and seen, have believed and have received the victory over sin and death and the powers of evil.

The Memorial—The Communion—The Sacrifice: in that threefold division, and in that order, let us draw near with reverence to understand once again our Lord's strange victory which He desires to share with us.

The Memorial

The Prayer of Consecration begins by recalling to us that what is here brought to mind is not simply a mighty act of love at one moment in history. It is that, but even so its value consists in the fact that at that moment in history there is revealed the inner nature of the Eternal God.

"God so loved that He gave"—givingness is the supreme attribute of Fatherhood—the givingness of absolute love.

And loving subordination to the Father's will, that is obedience, is the supreme attribute of sonship—the obedience of absolute love.

Yet even this would be hidden from our minds, and we would still be without God and without hope in the world but for that revelation in our own experience given to us by the Holy Spirit.

¹ Cranmer : " And this faith God works inwardly in our hearts by his holy Spirit, and confirms the same outwardly to our ears, by the hearing of his word, and to our other senses by the eating and drinking of the sacramental bread and wine in his holy supper."

So here we are to understand God one in His givingness, threefold in the manifestation of that givingness, God above, God incarnate, God inspiring.

Remembering that what we see is the nature of the Eternal God, and that we are enabled to see it only by the inspiration of the Eternal Spirit we can lift up our eyes to Christ, our only Saviour. By faith our eyes can see Him presiding at His table, and as of old taking the bread and wine and using them as a most efficient symbol of His victory. They speak to us of the victory completed: the broken bread of His body and the wine of His blood anticipating the completed sacrifice; the Institution which offers to share the victory; the command to make "a perpetual memory . . . until His coming again" declaring the final victory. This thought of the Christ, crucified-risen, Himself acting as the host at His own table and declaring afresh His victory to His disciples in every age and sharing it with them is the determining conception of the Holy Communion service as Evangelically understood. It governs all our understanding of the Sacrament. It is because of, and through, the enjoyment of His risen presence that His supper becomes for us

"a solemn ordinance, designed for a perpetual exhibition and commemoration of the atoning sacrifice of the death of Christ"¹

Thus it is we understand the words of the Prayer "who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

There is, and can be, no repetition of that sacrifice. But there can be a representation of it, a memorial of it. This representation and memorial is effected before our eyes when the celebrant performs the same actions as our Lord performed. He takes the bread and breaks it, He blesses the wine. He uses the same words "This is my

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 54.

body," "This is my blood." The Life whose perfect obedience was offered up on Calvary comes alive to our minds and souls. The sacrifice is here before our eyes. By the Holy Spirit our Lord is made known to us in His perfect self-offering. The essential thing to know for our soul's salvation is that here it is God who does something and not man. When it comes to the atonement, the reconciliation between God and man, man can do nothing, and if he thinks he can, he imperils all. So it is that Waterland reminds us

"We do not offer Christ to God in the Eucharist, but God offers Christ to us."¹

Our sacrifice in the Eucharist, and it is a real sacrifice, comes with the fulfilment of the cycle of the Upper Room. But in the service that is not yet. In the actual prayer of consecration Christ is made known to us as our sacrifice in the same way that He was made known as a sacrifice to His disciples. He declared Himself to them as sacrificed. So in this memorial which He instituted He declares Himself to us. Both declarations are equally real. To the eye of faith Christ is as really present breaking the bread now as He was in the Upper Room nineteen hundred years ago. This is what we mean, then, when we say that our Lord is known to us "in the breaking of bread." The breaking is the true memorial of the sacrifice, the remembrance of the Cross, for did He not thereby signify His death for the remission of our sins.

This is the reason why, for Evangelical practice, it is of primary importance that the action of the Upper Room shall be visible, and the "manual acts" of the celebrant be seen by the people. The whole of our doctrine demands this, for it is here that in a mystery we

"look up to the offering of Jesus Christ once for all: look to him as dying for the remission of *our* sins, washing them away in his precious blood; suffering

¹ Waterland, *The Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 339.

that *we* might be saved. And while *we* are kneeling under his cross, touched with the utmost possible sense of God's love, who gave his only begotten Son, and affected with sentiments of the most tender devotion to him who gave himself for *us*; *we* embrace also with *our* goodwill all mankind whom he loved for his sake."¹

Some of that phraseology would be differently expressed to-day, but the sense remains as truly expressive of the humble gratitude we feel before the Cross and the assurance we possess that a Victory was won there which embraces us and all mankind. With such a Gospel we must be Evangelistic or we cannot be Evangelical.

In this connection it should also be added that the communicants should attend to this prayer with their eyes open, intently watching. It is a mistaken form of devotion at this place to have the eyes closed. Furthermore the "Amen" at the end of the prayer which should be said gladly and strongly by all present is an "Amen" to what has been done as well as to what has been said.

First, then, we have here a memorial of the sacrifice of our Lord Himself. Before our eyes, time standing still, we have seen Him offer Himself. We cannot make that offering nor can we repeat it. There is a once-for-allness which is essential to the meaning of our Lord's victory whereby in perfect oneness both with God and with man He demonstrated an obedience unto death which defeated sin and the forces of evil, and transformed death from the wages of sin to the gateway of life.

The Communion

Now because the victory has been achieved it can be shared. Jesus invites us to partake, and we come forward to hear the declaration of the Upper Room made personal to each of us:

"The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto ever-

¹From an anonymous contemporary quoted by Edward Bickersteth in *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 61. (Italics mine).

lasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving."

"The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful."

Here first our Communion is with our Lord Himself. Crucified-risen He has just declared His victory. Now He shares it. "There is in the Lord's Supper, when duly received, a special act of faith in the atonement of Christ."¹ Here the atonement declared in the breaking of the bread is appropriated by faith in the eating of the bread, and in the wine likewise. Cranmer's great words give us the true understanding of this communion-atonement.

"The true eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ is, with a constant and lively faith to believe that he gave his body and shed his blood on the cross for us, and that he does so join and incorporate himself to us, that he is our head and we his members; and flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, having him dwelling in us, and we in him. And herein stands the whole effect and strength of this sacrament. And this faith God works inwardly in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and confirms the same outwardly to our ears, by the hearing of his word and to our other senses by the eating and drinking of the sacramental bread and wine in his holy supper."

A considerable part of Bickersteth's book on *The Lord's Supper* is devoted to a consideration of the other benefits connected with a due reception of the Sacrament. It should always be most strongly maintained that the true Evangelical takes a "high" and not a "low" view of the Sacrament of our redemption. This is not to say that we are at all concerned to illustrate that high view by ornamenting

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 25.

the service with a complicated ritual and surrounding it with subsidiary devotions. That may be one way of showing an appreciation of "the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ." It is not the only way. Moreover, in many particulars such ceremonial and additional devotions derive from a different doctrine and from an understanding of the Sacrament which is not Evangelical. At the same time ceremonial is not to be objected to as such, and in so far as it enhances the doctrine which we believe it is very much to be desired. Ritual and ceremonial which express doctrine are not distractions. They are the dignified apparel in which the doctrines we believe are set forth for the seeing of the eye as are the words spoken for the hearing of the ear.

Having then a "high" doctrine of the Sacrament we shall expect great things from God.

"Come here," says the commentator, Matthew Henry, "and see the victories of the Cross. Christ's wounds are thy healing, his agonies thy repose, his conflicts thy conquests, his groans thy songs, his pains thine ease, his shame thy glory, his death thy life, his sufferings thy salvation."¹

All the good things which in the New Testament are linked to faith in Christ do, in fact, belong to the faithful communicant. "Many Christians," says Bickersteth, "do not expect enough at the Lord's Table, and thence lose much of the benefits to be there obtained," and he goes on to speak of forgiveness, a new relationship with God, peace, and eternal life and adds :

"the real believer, through the mercy of God, in the right reception of the Lord's supper, has the present enjoyment of those benefits which were obtained by the sacrifice of Christ, and the strengthening of those graces, in the exercising of which that enjoyment is communicated."²

¹ Quoted by Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 107.

² *Op cit.*, p. 109.

By this latter point it would seem that Bickersteth has in mind the grace of obedience which for him and for others like him was so decisive a factor in the views which they formed of the Lord's Supper. In doing what Christ had commanded, and in doing it regularly, they were, in a real sense, disciplined into a conformity with His own life of obedience. Thus for them the life of Christ came alive through His death.

Here, also, faith grows by what it feeds upon. Here in the bread and wine are the assurance of the victory won, now offered, and to be consummated. Here, then, is a rallying point of faith, the very place where the discouraged, disheartened and defeated Christian should be able to come for healing. The words of the Christ after the Absolution "Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," are a mockery if those who need the comfort most are to be debarred from it. As Bickersteth, with deep sympathy, says in another place "This feast is not for angels, but for men encompassed with infirmities."¹

Here, also, the victory of the Christ now shared with us opens out the new way of living of which He was the pioneer. This new way of life, a life in conformity with the will of God, is what the Bible calls the way of holiness, and the working out of the new temper which enables us to walk this way is called sanctification. "What Christian," asks Bickersteth, "has not found the blood of Christ, as here manifested and applied, *purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God*: the death of Christ becoming the spring of love, gratitude, and holy obedience. . . . The due attendance on this means of grace will be accompanied by a manifest growth in humility, delighting in God, and doing good. . . . So, when at the Lord's table, we receive "the healthful spirit of God's grace," we *hunger and thirst after righteousness* we are raised up to new vigour in the spiritual life, we walk again with God, and go to our daily duties with fresh zeal and devotion."²

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 83.

² Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 113.

All too inadequately there have been outlined a few of the direct results which are involved in a trustful reception of the bread and wine from the hands of Christ crucified-risen. But in addition the sharing of the bread and wine was, in effect, a uniting of the disciples not only individually to Christ but corporately to one another. It is here, if anywhere, at a moment when the Church of the Old Israel, God's designed instrument of witness to Himself, has shrunk to the one faithful Israelite, that Christ Himself reconstitutes the Church in the persons of those disciples, thus mystically united with Himself, to be His Body before the world. The redeemer becomes the redeeming community.

The receiving of the bread and wine does indeed unite us with Christ. But as surely it unites us with our brethren. If it does not do so we have begun to overthrow the nature of this Sacrament, and it must be seriously doubted if in receiving it otherwise than Christ intended it, we can at all presume to claim any of the benefits. To refuse to recognize our membership in his mystical body, the Church, with all its direct responsibilities for life and conduct and its peculiar duties to those who share with us in the Sacrament, that is to eat the body of Christ and to drink His blood unworthily, and to come at once under condemnation rather than blessing.

If only Christians would see it, this is the terrifying part of the Sacrament. We have nothing to fear in drawing near to the love of Christ.

Nothing in my hand I bring.

That is how he wants us to come.

Simply to thy Cross I cling;

That is all we have to do.

Naked, come to thee for dress;

His righteousness will make up for our "filthy rags".

Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;

He is full of grace and truth, " more full of grace than I of sin."

Foul I to the fountain fly ;

His blood avails for me.

All that is most gloriously true. For us there can be no terror in the Sacrament in so far as the Sacrament is Christ. But the Sacrament is also our brother who meets us there in Christ, our sister, our neighbour, our employer, our employee, our enemy. That is terrifying because

" He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? (1 John 4 : 20).

And more uncompromising still, in the setting of the Sacrament, is the word in 1 John 3 : 17

" Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him " ?

This word, we remember, is linked to the death of Christ, and, therefore, to the Sacrament of his death by the words which immediately precede it

" Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren " (1 John 3 : 16).

The challenge is stern enough with regard to our fellow-communicants, and there are but few who would not acknowledge that all our fellow-christians of whatever denomination are involved. But the same Christ who told the story of the Good Samaritan extended the obligations of compassionate service to include our most despised neighbours, and on the Cross, of which the breaking of the bread is a symbol, He included in his compassion all His

enemies. The arms of that Cross stand open wide to embrace all mankind. Our obligations of service therefore are infinite. We are debtors to all men.

From this it follows that our Gospel is a social Gospel or it is not a Gospel. "This world's good" and the brother's "need" are material things if words mean anything, as material as the bread and wine.

But if this thought sobers us, as it most surely ought to do, it is also given to us as a great encouragement for the meeting with our "brother" in the Sacrament is a means of grace. Have we not our Lord's other assurance that whoever shall receive a child or a disciple receives the Christ (St. Luke 9: 48, St. Matt. 10: 40). That applies outside the Sacrament as well as within it. It applies everywhere, but again assuredly with special meaning and grace in the Sacrament from which the meeting is to be extended out into all life's relationships each of them in some real degree sacramental because linked to the great Sacrament. Here, then, we find in the very act of communion with our Lord and our brethren in Him the source of that priesthood of all believers which is so fundamentally part of the Christian heritage, and the real source of Christian social doctrine. Every Christian, in whatever his employment, has a priesthood to exercise. He represents Christ to his fellows and he represents the mystical body of Christ, His Church, also to his fellows. He is a minister of reconciliation seeking by his life and witness "so to proclaim Christ Jesus as Saviour that men shall come to put their trust in Him and serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of His Church."

What a mighty strengthening it is for the Christian in his vocation when he knows that in the Holy Communion he is one of a great company of brethren, bound to one another in the body and blood of our brother Christ.

Some words of Augustine will make clear the doctrinal basis of what has here been argued, and will serve also to make the transition to the third part of our consideration of these central moments of the service. According to Waterland, from whom I quote, Augustine

"comprises all the Gospel sacrifices under two: one of which is our Lord's own sacrifice upon the Cross; and the other is the Church's offering herself. The first of these is represented and participated in the Eucharist, the latter is executed: this is the sum of his doctrine. Of the former he observes, that it succeeded in the room of the legal sacrifices which prefigured it: of the latter he observes, that the legal sacrifices were signs or symbols of it . . . The body of Christ he considers as twofold, natural and mystical; one of which is represented by us, and exhibited by Christ in the Eucharist; the other is offered as a proper spiritual sacrifice: and the bread and wine in the Eucharist are considered as symbols of both. I say, he considers the sacramental elements not merely as symbols of the natural body, but of the mystical also, viz. the Church, represented by the one loaf and the one cup: so that by the same symbols we symbolically consign ourselves over to God, and God consigns Christ, with all the merits of his death and passion, over to us. . . . The offering of the body of Christ is a phrase capable of two meanings; either to signify the representing the natural body, or the devoting the mystical body. . . . As the word 'offer' is a word of some latitude, he supposes both to be offered in the Eucharist, one by way of memorial before God and the other as a real and spiritual sacrifice unto God"¹

In the sharing of His Victory with His disciples our Saviour re-constituted His Church as being His mystical body. This conviction unites almost all Christians of whatever allegiance. It is firmly based upon the New Testament.

"We, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10: 17),

¹ Waterland, *op. cit.*, pp. 347, 348, St. Augustine de Civit. Dei, lib. XVII, cap. 21; lib. X, cap. 20; lib. XIX, cap. 23; lib. X, cap. 6; Sermons CCXXIX, CCLXXII.

says Paul in a eucharistic context. In Chapter 12 of the same epistle he develops the same thought, bringing it to a climax with the words

“Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”
(1 Cor. 12 : 27).

The epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians are equally, if not more, explicit. It is the more interesting, therefore, to find that the words of Paul in Romans 12 : 5, an echo of 1 Cor. 10 : 17,

“We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,”

should appear in a context which opens with the appeal

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12 : 1).

So we turn to our sacrifice.

The Sacrifice

The prayer of Oblation by which our sacrifice is offered is introduced by the Lord's prayer. As Bishop Thomas Wilson comments

“Now being made one with Christ, and Christ with us, we have full liberty, to apply to God as our Heavenly Father,”¹

but this is true in a particular way now because by accepting at Christ's hands the symbols of His sacrifice we have by faith accepted into our lives His victory, for that is His intention. We realise the atonement, and enjoy afresh the adoption of sonship. Bickersteth has an interesting com-

¹ Thomas Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

ment when, referring to neglect of Holy Communion, he speaks of the Christian as undervaluing his baptism

“That (*baptism*) was the sign of your admission into the Christian Church. The Lord's Supper is the sign of your continuance in it.”¹

The Lord's prayer, coming thus immediately upon the reception of the bread and wine, is a thanksgiving by the faithful for their incorporation into the family of God at the Sacrament of Baptism and their present sealing for the purposes of God in the Sacrament of the Body and the Blood. In the strength of the grace given by Christ as He shares His victory we are enabled to make our act of sacrifice. What is this sacrifice that we make as members of His mystical body the Church? We can say explicitly that prayers, praises and universal obedience are the only Christian sacrifices. These are our “reasonable service.” As Justin Martyr in the second century puts it

“Prayers and thanksgiving, made by them that are worthy, are the only perfect and acceptable sacrifices . . . those only are offered in the eucharistical commemoration.”²

“Them that are worthy” is a phrase that might make us pause. Have we not in the prayer of “Humble Access” prayed “We are not worthy . . .”? Since then, however, Christ has given us His worthiness to be ours. Our life is now His life, and in that strength, and only in that strength, can we offer any sacrifice. This is one sufficient reason why the Reformers of our Church were right in moving this prayer of our sacrifice away from the memorial of Christ's sacrifice and setting it where alone it is proper after we have appropriated to ourselves in the Sacrament the strength of our Lord's own victorious sacrifice. Before the act of communion we are spectators and hearers and

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 70.

² Justin Martyr. *Dialogue*.

worshippers only. "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table," let alone offer a sacrifice. Let it be reiterated once again that in the symbolism of the Lord's Supper the Church is re-constituted *after* the memorial of the crucifixion, which is the "breaking of the bread." The partaking of the bread and wine is the sharing of the victory.

"There is therefore a very plain and intelligible difference between the Eucharist being a sacrifice of the real Body and Blood of Christ, and its being a real sacrifice of his mystical body and blood"¹

As Augustine has reminded us there is a natural and a mystical body of Christ, and these are not to be confused.

That same early Father already quoted, Justin Martyr, in another place extends the meaning of "prayers and thanksgivings" to show their practical outworking. He says

"We have been taught, that God has no need of any material oblation from men; well knowing, that he is the giver of all things: but we are informed, and persuaded, and do believe, that he accepts those only who copy after his moral perfections, purity, righteousness, philanthropy."²

This brings us to note that there are two prayers of oblation. A strange argument has been advanced that because the word "sacrifice" is not used in the second prayer of oblation this is not properly a prayer of oblation at all. We do well to consider the last quotation from Justin Martyr in the light of the previous one, and to remember that other word of Augustine,

"A true sacrifice is any work done to keep up our league of amity with God, referred to him as our sovereign good, in whom we may enjoy true felicity."³

¹ A catena of authorities with regard to the Altar and the Eucharistic Sacrifice, by F. H. Murray. (Bodleian Library).

² Justin Martyr, *Apology*.

³ Augustine, *de Civit. Dei*, Lib. X, cap. 6.

We may then, perhaps, remember what the second prayer of oblation clearly implies. Our Lord instituted this Sacrament as an *instrument* of unity effectively binding together his disciples. A prayer which explicitly recognises as a favour and goodness from God that having "duly received these holy mysteries . . . the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ" we are "very members incorporate in the mystical body of Thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people"; and which goes on to pray for the grace "that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in"; such a prayer certainly comes within the understanding of sacrifice accepted by Justin Martyr and Augustine. We are therefore fully entitled to treat it as an alternative means by which as members of the mystical body of Christ which is His Church, we offer up to God "ourselves, our souls and bodies" for His service.

When we go on to reflect that Christ's purpose in thus sharing His victory with us is to extend its range beyond the field of human history then we get a fresh understanding of the words in the consecration prayer "until his coming again." As Bickersteth once more teaches us

"The due reception of the Lord's supper is thus one of the most effective means of preparation for the second coming of Christ. Never are we more ready for the immediate presence of our Lord than when, with a broken and contrite spirit, with a lively faith in his death, with ardent gratitude for his unspeakable mercies, and warm love to our fellow-creatures, we have been remembering Christ at his table."¹

That second coming will receive varying interpretations, but it speaks at least of this that there will be an end of history, as we know it, and that that end will be of God's contriving. Our direct contribution to that end, our real contribution comes through those spiritual sacrifices

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 117.

whereby, in union with Christ, this victory is realised in the world through us. And that realisation may involve for the disciple, as it did for the Lord, sacrifice unto death. In some fashion or another, indeed, it is bound to do so for "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (St. John 12 : 24).

We have already seen that in intention, at least, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3 : 16). We live in a moment of history when such sacrifice may be demanded of any of us in most literal fashion. Now, as ever, it is inescapably true that only by losing life do we find it. So in a very particular sense the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is a preparation for death. Our own sacrifices, spiritual though they be in the setting of this service, yet imply a dying daily which will one day be death in fact. Through a humble and devoted reception of this Sacrament we prepare for that day. One with Christ, we know that His victory has overcome death as well as sin. In a mystery our life is caught up with Christ in God. As we receive the victory at His hands we can surely make our own the words of the Apostle :

"I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me : and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2 : 20, R.V.).

VII

THE MYSTERY

IN the company of all faithful people we have just offered our sacrifice of obedience to God our Father, strengthened so to do by His gift to us of His Son, the needful faith having been worked "inwardly in our hearts" by His Holy Spirit. God above, God Incarnate, God inspiring, has made known unto us the mystery of His will, "the mystery which hath been hid from the ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. 1: 26). And this mystery, says the Apostle to the Church in Colossae, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." To this annunciation we can but make the old reply, "Behold the servant of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." That is our sacrifice, the only sacrifice we can offer, the sacrifice of obedience.

Having made the response there follows our "Magnificat," which is that great hymn of praise known as the "Gloria in Excelsis." Where this cannot be sung it should at least be said in the spirit of song. For we are giving praise for the realisation of the divine purpose, we are celebrating the victory of Christ crucified-risen by whom and in whom God and the world have been reconciled, are being even now reconciled, and will one day enjoy the fulness of reconciliation. A new situation has been created in the person of Christ our Lord who was dead and is alive for evermore, and has "the keys of hell and of death."

This is a mystery. And it will always remain a mystery, because that is the very nature of love. Yet, paradoxically, it is true that in the New Testament a mystery is not something that remains concealed. Rather it is the subject of a revelation. We are to "know the mystery." We are "to understand" it. The mystery is not clouds and dark-

ness, but light. Though we shall humbly admit that the light is very dazzling, and that we only "know in part," yet we follow on, to know more completely. The little that we already know of the "Christ in us" is the very hope of more glorious experience yet to come.

The mystery of the atonement can never be compassed by the human mind. It has to be declared as a fact, it has to be revealed as something which has already happened, and therefore is a possibility now, and only awaits our obedience for a fuller consummation. Atonement is man at one with God without any separating barrier, and created nature in harmony with God without any discord. It is part of the mystery that the discord of the universe awaits the manifestation of the atonement in the sons of God (Rom. 8 : 19); as indeed the discords of human society await the at-one-ness of the Church of God which is God's chosen instrument by which the mystery of His love is to be revealed "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery" (Eph. 3 : 9).

It is the very core of the Gospel that the atonement is made by God Himself. Mankind stands guilty before God. All men knowingly have preferred evil to good, have set each himself in the centre of life where only God is entitled to be. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3 : 23). And sin, as Paul reminds us, "hath reigned unto death" (Rom. 5 : 21). Sin and death are indeed inseparably conjoined in the thought of the New Testament because disobedience to God, which is sin, means separation from God, which is death. As the Father, Irenaeus, has it :

"Fellowship with God is life and light, and the fruition of the good things that are with him. But on those who voluntarily rebel against God, he brings separation from him; and separation from God is death"¹

The Victory of God's love, which in His patience is His victory throughout human history, reached supreme

¹ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 27. 2.

expression when in Christ God entered into human experience in a new way. This is the meaning of Paul's description of Christ as another Adam. In Christ, God works a new creation. A new age begins. In Christ a new kind of man lives a life of obedience to God. Sin which is disobedience is demonstrated as overcome. The powers of evil are seen to be worsted in the fight. And yet this "new kind of man" is no less demonstrably one with us in a common humanity. "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," but not as something external to Himself, a god play-acting as a man, but as one who "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4 : 15). This life of obedience was at once an offering to God, and an offering to man. To God it was that obedience which is better than sacrifice. To man it was a sacrifice that demonstrated the possibility of obedience. But sin being what sin is, and the powers of evil, being jealous for their dominion, the hearts of men were turned away from the new kind of man. And when He persisted in His offering it was found expedient to put Him to death. And by that death evil over-reached itself, as evil always does in the end, evil being self-defeating because the universe belongs to God and is the expression of His purpose. Christ crucified-risen declares the victory of God. In Christ sin found no lodgment, and therefore death itself lost its power and became, once again, what it was designed to be, that change which in the twinkling of an eye enables "this mortal to put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15 : 53).

It is our faith that this new kind of man, this "second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15 : 47), and that as in the first man all die, even so in the second man shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15 : 22). And we believe that all this is set forth for us in the Lord's Supper, from which, if we remember the equating of death and sin, we can understand how the ancients spoke of the Sacrament as the "medicine of immortality." Seeing, then, that by His death and resurrection so great a victory has been won, so wonderful an atonement made, and made available for us, we do in this Sacrament celebrate the victory and share in

it. So it is that we lift up our hearts and minds in a burst of praise

“Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good-will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.”

Redeemed mankind throws back the angels' song, their act of faith above Bethlehem, and they see in us the reward of their faith and the courts of heaven ring as our worship mingles with that of all the hosts of light. The pattern of our service is thus completed by this great act of thanksgiving parallel to that whose climax was the “Sanctus.” In imagination we can see the wings of the angels who worship God day and night as His ministers, and all the company of heaven, merging into the figures of the Cherubim who knelt one at each end of the mercy seat, that trysting place where God and man are one. His memorial, His communion with us, our sacrifice to Him are surrounded with praise, the praise of heaven as well as the praise of earth.

Yet our worship does not lose itself in heaven. It is not escapism. The trumpet of the Resurrection rallies us to the victories to be won in the world of to-day in the strength of the victory won on Calvary. This explains the central section of the Gloria. But it should be emphasised that there is no abatement of the triumph song. Archbishop Temple used to insist that these refrains addressed to our Lord “that takest away the sins of the world” are not penitential but radiantly confident of that victory which is shared with us; and the cry for mercy is here not a cry for forgiveness but a cry for more grace to understand, appreciate and share the victorious purpose of our Lord. Our prayer is

*In manifested love explain
Thy wonderful design;
What meant the suffering Son of Man,
The streaming blood divine?*

*Didst thou not in our flesh appear,
And live and die below,
That I may now perceive thee near
And my Redeemer know.¹*

"Christ in us, the hope of glory." That is our prayer. But it is only a Christian prayer if we recollect the context of the words of Paul and remember the purpose of God which is that "the riches of the glory of this mystery" shall be made known "among the Gentiles" (Col. 1 : 27), those "unsearchable riches of Christ" for which as he says to the Ephesians he has been given grace in order to preach them "among the Gentiles . . . and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery" (Eph. 3 : 8, 9). Realising this, we find ourselves immediately in that world of sin and death in which the forces of evil are still at work seeking to frustrate the purpose of God, blinding men to the truth of the victory won in Christ, and seeking to postpone by every means at their disposal the day when

"every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,"

shall be heard saying

"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5 : 13).

But not yet are all things put under Him, which is the all-sufficient reason why in the context of the mystery that is revealed the apostle declares as his primary task, and the primary task of the Church, the work of proclaiming the Gospel. In this great act of praise it is not so much the victory won once-for-all, or the final victory still to be achieved which is here being sung but the present victory of the Christ who even now

"is taking away the sins of the world."

¹ Charles Wesley, *Methodist Hymn Book*, 1933 Ed., No. 172.

Christ is out in our world amongst the men and women for whom He died. He sees them suffering and dying without hope and without understanding. He sees faith in any sort of meaning for life or purpose in history fading away. He sees the very earth itself which His "feet trod in ancient time" raped and destroyed to bring a quick return to men who blasphemously imagine that the earth was made for their private enjoyment, and forget Him for whose pleasure all things "are and were created" (Rev. 4: 11).

What strange victory is this which dares to proclaim itself in the fiery embers of such obvious defeat? Unless we can feel the contrast between the "Gloria in Excelsis" and the world "in tenebris": unless we can hold the two fast in one embrace, refusing to separate them, we do not even begin to understand the mystery of our faith. In the infinitely mysterious love of God, that mystery is in this Sacrament shown forth to us by word and action, and then offered to us, so that we may join with Him in the love which never ceases to go out to that world which He so loves. To share in this Sacrament is to partake of the patience of God which is infinite, the patience which is the offspring of the divine conviction that the world of nature and the world of human nature, not two worlds but one world, created by God as the expression of His love, can only find fulfilment in obedience to the laws of God, the laws of love. So the Father worketh hitherto, and the Son likewise, and the Holy Spirit. And by this Sacrament God invites us into that divine partnership. To be "in Christ" is to be

"adopted to share in Jesus Christ's relationship to the Father in heaven and to the Father's world, in the Spirit. The formula for the Christian life is seeking, finding and doing the Father's will in the Father's world with the companionship of the Son by the guidance and strength of the Spirit."¹

¹ Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 178. For the full development of this thought the reader is urged to read the chapter on "Trinitarian Religion," in Professor Hodgson's book.

This is not to be understood as a purely individual experience though it is deeply personal. The sharing of the bread and wine was not confined to an individual. It was an act by which a new community was born. It is an essentially corporate experience. It is as those, who are knit together in what Paul calls the communion of the body and the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10 : 16), that we are adopted into the life of the Holy Trinity. So the Church goes out with God into the world and God goes out into the world through His Church. "The company of all faithful people" is the ambassador of God, His herald to the world to which we say :

"as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5 : 20).

In that company when men and women believe that

"the glory of life is to give, not to get; to love, not to be loved,"

and in which they

"measure *their* life by loss instead of gain,
not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth,"

because they know that

"Love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice
And he who suffers most has most to give,"¹

there the Christ still works His strange victory, and "takes away the sins of the world." Our sacrifice is caught up into His sacrifice. His perfect sacrifice hallows our imperfect offerings, even the "iniquity of *our* holy things" (Ex. 28 : 38). We become priests unto God

"as handing up those prayers and those services of Christians to Christ our Lord, who as High Priest recommends the same in heaven to God the Father."²

¹ Eleanor Hamilton King, *The Disciples*.

² Waterland, *op cit.*, p. 313

For

“Thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”

Infinitely exalted, yet deeply humble, we receive into our hearts and minds

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding,”

our lives being garrisoned with “the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And then we go out into the world that so desperately needs the sacrifice of our service so that it, too, may know the victory, with “the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” ringing in our ears, and echoing from our hearts because He is in our midst, like the Shekinah of old, and will accompany all our journeyings unto the end.

There is a profound truth in that most Evangelical insight, that

“the greatest moment in the Holy Communion service is that moment in which we go out of the Church with Christ.”

PART III

An Essay in Rediscovery

VIII

A GOODLY HERITAGE

SOUTHEY'S *Life of Wesley*¹ contains the following reference to Grimshaw of Haworth, one of the first generation of leaders of the Evangelical Revival within the Church of England in the eighteenth century:

“When Whitefield or Wesley came to visit him, a scaffold was erected for them in the Churchyard, the Church not being large enough to hold the concourse that assembled. Prayers, therefore, were read in the Church, the Reading was in the open air, and the Sacrament was afterwards administered to successive congregations, one Churchfull at a time.”

Nor was that exceptional. In Wesley's *Journal* for Sunday, May 22nd, 1756, we read of there being “one thousand communicants, and scarcely a trifler among them.” And that all this was due not only to Wesley but also to Grimshaw may be gauged from another reference in the *Journal* for August 3rd, 1766

“When the prayers at Haworth were ended I preached from a little scaffold on the South side of the Church, on those words in the Gospel, ‘O that thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace!’ The communicants alone (a sight which has not been seen since Mr. Grimshaw's death) filled the Church.”

Then there was that unforgettable Holy Week in the year 1779. An undergraduate of King's College, Cambridge,

¹ Southey, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 190 (1864 edn.).

was reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord's Supper, and in a memoir he records that there

"I met with an expression to this effect: 'That the Jews knew what they did when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering.' The thought rushed into my mind, What! may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an offering for me, that I may lay my sins on his head? then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer. Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus; and on the Wednesday began to have hope of mercy; on the Thursday that hope increased; on the Friday and Saturday it became more strong; and on the Sunday morning (Easter-day, April 4) I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips, 'Jesus Christ is risen to-day; Hallelujah! Hallelujah!' From that hour peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul: and at the Lord's table in our chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Saviour. I remember on that occasion there being more bread consecrated than was sufficient for the communicants, the clergyman gave some of us a piece more of it after the service; and on my putting it into my mouth I covered my face with my hand and prayed. The clergyman seeing it smiled at me; but I thought, if he had felt such a load taken off from his soul as I did, and had been as sensible of his obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ as I was, he would not deem my prayers and praises at all superfluous."¹

That same man, Charles Simeon, could write forty years later:

"There are but two objects that I have ever desired for these forty years to behold; the one is, my own vileness; and the other is, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: and I have always thought that they should be viewed together; just as Aaron confessed all the sins of all Israel whilst he put them on the head of the scape-

¹ William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon*, pp. 9, 10.

goat. The disease did not keep him from applying to the remedy, nor did the remedy keep him from feeling the disease. By this I seek to be, not only *humbled and thankful*, but *humbled in thankfulness*, before my God and Saviour continually.

This is the religion that pervades the whole Liturgy, and particularly the Communion Service, and this makes the Liturgy inexpressibly sweet to me."¹

Some few years after Simeon's conversion another young man, later to exercise a notable ministry in Islington, and a no less notable episcopate as Metropolitan of India, Daniel Wilson, on the first Sunday in October, 1797, received the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time. Writing to his mother, whose prayers he had asked for this occasion, he says:

"Blessed be God, I trust I can say that your prayers for me were answered, and that the Lord was with me of a truth.

"When I came into the Chapel I was very full of fears. . . . When I approached . . . the sacred table I was so full of trembling (I cannot describe my feelings), that I doubt not I appeared very foolish to those around me.

"But not to be tedious, I have abundant reason for gratitude and praise. Nor have the blessings of the ordinance been confined to yesterday; for, blessed be God, I think I never was so comfortable in my soul, and so desirous of loving my Saviour more and more, and living to His glory, than I have been to-day."²

He was never again to feel such a trembling, nor needed to do so, for he had discovered, as one who climbs a mountain, that the reward of climbing is always a view. Thus in his approach to the hill called Calvary to which he came through the blessed Sacrament he was wont to have, as his

¹ William Carus, *op. cit.*, pp. 519, 520.

² Josiah Bateman, *The Life of the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson*, Vol. I, p. 28.

undergraduate *Journal* records, "views of the grace and glory of Christ."¹ But he never forgot his first Communion, and one result was that from that day he made always the most careful preparation for the Communion, and taught others to do so, his counsels in this respect being set forth not only in his life but in a book which he wrote for young communicants in his parish at Islington.

Whether it was at the little Oxford village of Worton, or in the great London parish of Islington, the direct result of his ministry was a steady increase in the numbers of communicants. Some time during 1827 or 1828 the number of communicants at Islington Parish Church had so grown that we read in the record of this period that "an early Sacrament at eight o'clock" in addition to the usual celebration had been commenced.

Daniel Wilson's deep concern for the young and their spiritual needs, which has already been noted, finds remarkable expression in one of his sermons at Islington on the subject of education, expression which suggests that a form of sound words may have a sound as well as an unsound meaning!

"For myself," he says, "I will teach my child all the great facts and verities of the Christian religion :and with these I will connect an enlightened but devoted adherence to the edifying rites of our episcopal Church. I will present my child at the font of baptism. I will teach him to ratify in his own person in the rite of confirmation the vows then made. I will lead him to the altar of our Eucharistic sacrifice. I will train him to the observation of the sabbath, and the celebration of the public worship of God in the sublime devotions of our liturgy."²

The many references in earlier chapters to the views of Edward Bickersteth, secretary of the C.M.S. from 1816-1831, and later Rector of Watton, 1831-1850, will have provided ample evidence of his own deep sense of the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

² Josiah Bateman, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 157.

worth of the Sacrament of our redemption. It was for him a continuing means of grace. While still a lad of eighteen his *Journal* records a confession and a resolution:

"I had this day another opportunity of receiving the sacrament, which I omitted for no other cause than mere laziness. I am resolved henceforth never, when I have an opportunity of communicating, to omit it, unless for very cogent reasons."¹

As an undergraduate he writes some years later to his brother about a friend:

"I am particularly thankful that you have been able plainly to state to Mr. B—— the vast importance and benefit of frequenting the Lord's table."²

A few years later while on what was in those days the still very perilous adventure of spending a time on the West Coast of Africa visiting the Society's Missions he records a visit to one remote outstation. There were five present for the Sacrament and he writes:

"We found it good thus to meet four or five, and remember our crucified Lord. My heart was much broken and softened under my sinfulness and His love, and the difficulties in every respect attending this mission."³

In those days in England it was common, under the powerful influence of the Gospel preaching of these old Evangelicals, that many adults were converted. Many of these were, of course, lapsed communicants. As has been shown here one result of conversion was that such men and women flocked to the Holy Communion. The "high" view of that Sacrament taken by all who have been here

¹ T. R. Birks, *Memoir of Edward Bickersteth*, Vol. I, pp. 15, 16.

² T. R. Birks, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 148.

³ T. R. Birks, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 291.

considered led them without exception to stress the importance of preparation before reception. Perhaps the sternest, as well as one of the most loving, of these pastoral evangelists was Legh Richmond, Rector of Turvey, in Bedfordshire, from 1805-1827. It is recorded of him that

“The person proposing himself for the Communion (*The Prayer Book rubric being insisted upon before a first communion*) was examined, and a year of probation was recommended to him, for the trial of his sincerity, and the manifestation of it by a consistent and virtuous conversation.”¹

Such heroic standards were rare, and contradict much of the teaching that Bickersteth and Wilson were giving at the same time, but at least they do not suggest an undervaluing of the Sacrament, though the valuation would seem to take an unnatural form.

One final witness may be called as illustrating that heritage of devotion to our Liturgy which has been handed down to us from the men whose lives were devoted to the diffusion of the principles of the Evangelical revival throughout the Church of England. As is here contended the reception of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was one of those principles.

In the year 1810 a sermon was preached in the Church of St. Mary, Aylesbury, by the Rev. Basil Woodd which was afterwards printed under the title

“The Excellence of the Liturgy.”

From ample internal evidence it is quite clear that the preacher was not referring only to the services of Morning and Evening Prayer, for he speaks in one place as follows:

“The Psalms, the Lessons, the Epistle, the Gospel occupy one half, or more, of the whole service.”

¹ T. S. Grimshawe, *Memoirs of the Rev. Legh Richmond*, p. 132

The Liturgy that he has in mind is, in fact, Morning Prayer, the Litany and the Holy Communion, the three treated as a unity. Of this he could say:

“The Liturgy may therefore be considered as a summary of our most Holy Religion; it sets before us the character of the God whom we worship; the state of man as a transgressor of the Divine Law; the provision of the everlasting Gospel of his redemption; and the pardoned penitent drawing nigh to his reconciled Father.”¹

Of this same Liturgy he speaks as

“establishing a pure and unsophisticated standard of evangelical truth; so combined, that no man can duly attend to the service, and remain ignorant of the nature of the Gospel.”²

The historical introduction to this essay has been designed in part to draw attention to the fact that all the views here propounded were being set forth, and most earnestly propagated, between the years 1756 and 1831. There is no attempt to suggest that a similar catena of passages could not be secured for an earlier period as they could also from a later. Nor is there any reflection cast upon the many faithful ministries which adorned these years in which the light of faith was kept alive in many a parish by men who drew their inspiration more from the tradition of seventeenth-century Anglican piety of the school of Andrewes, Laud, and Ken, a tradition which was by no means extinct. But it will not be denied that during the period under review the most conspicuous evidence of spiritual life in the Church of England, the greatest activity in evangelism, and the most notable contribution to missionary endeavour and philanthropy were associated with that school of thought known as Evangelical.

¹ Basil Woodd, *The Excellence of the Liturgy*, p. 13.

² Basil Woodd, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

What is here claimed is that a deep concern for, and a regular and devout use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was one of the strongest principles of those who came to be known towards the end of this period as the Evangelicals. It is not, of course, in the least surprising that this was the case, for all periods of spiritual revival in the history of the Church of Christ have found expression in a greater care to obey his commands, particularly with reference to this Sacrament. But it is frequently forgotten that in this case it was so. Nevertheless the main purpose even of this historical introduction is not to state a claim so much as to ask two questions.

The first question is provoked by any study of the original documents of this period. What was it that made the Lord's Supper so important a part of the corporate worship of such men as here have been quoted, and of multitudes of others?

There is an interesting letter written by Daniel Wilson, while still a young man, which he sent to a friend who was making his first experiments as a lay preacher. The letter contains this paragraph:

"I should think you might with little difficulty preach a good sermon on that one word, CHRIST. Begin with Christ, go on with Christ, and end with Christ; and I am sure your hearers will never be tired, for his name is like 'ointment poured forth'."¹

With that may be linked an anonymous quotation in Bickersteth's *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*:

"What we more compendiously express in that general conclusion of our prayers, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, we more fully and forcibly represent in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist."²

To make the connection complete will be easy for any reader of Woodd's *The Excellence of the Liturgy* from which

¹ Josiah Bateman, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 26.

² Edward Bickersteth, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

the following reference to the Sermon in relation to the Liturgy as a whole is taken. The link between Sermon, the service of Morning Prayer and the Holy Communion is there explicit. After making a plea that the Sermon shall

“breathe the same spirit, exhibit the same distinguishing truths, and recommend the same purity of practice,”

he goes on:

“Let us prominently exhibit the Lord Jesus Christ, in the glory of his person, and the riches of his grace; as the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Let us frequently explain the nature of the New Covenant.”¹

These early Evangelicals believed profoundly in preaching the Word in season and out of season, and proved that such preaching “ministered grace to the hearer,” but they also believed that in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper the grace ministered by preaching was both confirmed in, and in a fuller measure conveyed to the believer. Bickersteth quotes Cranmer’s words:

“There is no kind of meat that is comfortable to the soul, but only the death of Christ’s blessed body; nor any kind of drink that can quench its thirst, but only the blood-shedding of our Saviour Christ,”

and goes on to comment as follows:

“Let us, then, when we receive the Lord’s Supper, spiritually feed on Christ as our all-sufficient and all-satisfying Saviour.”²

The Sacrament of our redemption was thus seen by these early Evangelicals as part of the evangelistic declaration of the love of God, the counterpart of their determination

¹ Basil Woodd, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 25.

² Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord’s Supper*, p. 29.

in their preaching "not to know anything . . . save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2: 2).

This close association of the Sermon and the Sacrament, of evangelistic preaching with worship was a notable assertion within the Anglican tradition that the sermon itself is an act of worship not to be divorced from but most closely associated with the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup. It is the glory of a true Evangelical ministry that when faithfully discharged it does, in this way, provide most adequately for the fulfilment of the solemn charge "Be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his Holy Sacraments." That there was a most close connection between the benefits enjoyed in the Sacrament, and the Gospel previously interpreted in the sermon, can be attested by innumerable references in such a life as that of Daniel Wilson and in the purpose of the Sermon as indicated by Basil Woodd.

Nor is this all. We have to remember that in this act of corporate worship, hearing the Cross proclaimed by word and action and then receiving the benefits of the victory, these Evangelicals found the compulsive power for their innumerable activities whether missionary, evangelistic, or philanthropic.

"To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ! It seems astonishing almost, that this should not be the ambition (if I may use a bad word in a good sense) of every Christian, who has tasted the loving kindness of the Lord, and how exactly he is suited to all our wants."¹

No one who has lived much with Bickersteth's *Treatise on the Lord's Supper* will doubt that the "tasting" above referred to refers to the Lord's Supper as well as to other means of Grace. And it is also on record that Daniel Wilson's own first desire to be a missionary followed, directly from the experience of his first Communion, of which he writes

¹ T. R. Birks, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

"The Lord shines so upon my soul that I cannot but love him, and desire no longer to live to myself, but to him . . . I have felt great desires to go or do anything to spread the name of Jesus; and that I have even wished, if it were the Lord's will, to go as a missionary to heathen lands."¹

The text for the Sermon at that Holy Communion service was Hebrews 9: 22: "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

The second question which remains to be asked is—in what manner and to how great a degree are we who call ourselves Evangelicals entering into and developing our goodly heritage?

From some points of view there is much to encourage us. The evangelistic and missionary concern which our fathers were anxious to foster and extend is now largely shared by the whole of our Church. As a result of that impulse which they gave, the Church of England has become the world-wide Anglican communion. Some, at least, of that original doctrinal emphasis with its corollaries in the life and work of the Church has become a recognised part of the heritage of the younger Churches. Nor is Evangelical zeal for the missionary work of Christ's Church in any decline. It can only be a ground of rejoicing that it is no longer, as at one time, so tragically conspicuous. Furthermore the concern for active evangelism has become an accepted part of the Church's activity, and that in no formal but in a most dynamic sense. Our pride is that it is no longer our pride.

As touching social righteousness, the application of the principles of the Gospel to the common life of man, our record is less happy. Apart from some great pioneering efforts in this respect overseas, the witness of Evangelicals has sadly declined since the days of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury. At a time when industrial England was becoming a vast slum, and the seeds were being sown of that international anarchy in which we live to-day, no Evangelical voices were raised in prophecy.

¹ Josiah Bateman, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 29.

The truth of the matter must be more fully investigated by some historian specializing in later nineteenth century history. A guess may be hazarded that some relation will be found between the failure of the Evangelical witness to maintain itself in its early vigour, *and* the gradual decay of that confident proclamation of the Gospel by both Word and Sacrament, which was so characteristic of that early vigour. And this failure, in turn, led on to the other failure to see when a fuller understanding of the corporate emphasis of the Sacrament could, without any sacrifice of Evangelical principle, have provided the Evangelicals with the prophetic message which a society, disillusioned by individualism, was looking for, and failing to find from Evangelicals.

There are two clues which I would submit are worth following up both as an understanding of some part of the later failure of Evangelicalism, and also as pointing to dangers in which we stand ourselves to-day and always.

The first clue comes from Simeon. In his memoirs are recorded the following revealing lines:

"I consider the religion of the day as materially defective in this point; and the preaching of pious (*Evangelical*) Ministers defective also. I do not see, so much as I could wish, an holy reverential awe of God. The confidence that is generally professed does not sufficiently, in my opinion, savour of a creature-like spirit, or of a sinner-like spirit. If ninety-nine out of an hundred, of even good men, were now informed for the first time, that Isaiah in a vision saw the Seraphim before the throne; and that each of the Seraphs had six wings; and then were asked, 'How do you think that they employ their wings?' I think their answer would be 'How? Why they fly with them with all their might; and if they had six hundred wings they would do the same, exerting all their powers in the service of their God'; they would never dream of their employing two to veil their faces, as unworthy to behold their God,

and two to veil their feet, as unworthy to serve him; and devoting only the remaining two to what might be deemed their more appropriate use. But I doubt much whether the Seraphs do not judge quite as well as they, and serve their God in quite as acceptable a manner as they would, if their energies were less blended with modesty and conscious unworthiness. But whatever opinions the generality of Christians might form, I confess that this is the religion which I love; I would have conscious unworthiness to pervade every act and habit of my soul; and whether the woof be more or less brilliant, I would have humility to be the warp."¹

I would submit that clue as evidence of a mind and soul steeped in the Liturgy, and more particularly in the Holy Communion service according to our Prayer Book. He being dead yet speaketh, and challenges the shallowness which then evidently, as now, characterized too many of the servants of Christ.

My second clue is taken from *A Companion to the Holy Communion*, a shortened version of his *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, designed by Bickersteth for younger communicants. He speaks of the opposite danger to that of self-righteous dependence on the Sacrament, "that of having too slight thoughts of its utility." He then quotes Milner as follows:

"Well-disposed persons who often gain both spiritual comfort and strength through sermons gain nothing from the sacrament. Why is this? They are in too lazy a posture of soul: they do not reverently esteem, as they should, this precious means of grace, as the channel in which the comforts of salvation may be expected richly to flow. Our Reformers speak differently on the importance of this institution. From the expression, "dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son," it is evident

¹ William Carus, *op. cit.*, pp. 522, 523.

that the blessing of assurance was in their idea connected with the right reception of this ordinance."¹

The indictment of these great spiritual leaders, brought by them against certain tendencies already visible in the movement in their day, is a searching challenge to our hearts now. In two sentences that indictment can be summarised. In the view of Simeon it was "lack of depth." In view of Bickersteth and Milner it was a "lazy posture of soul."

The paradox of Evangelicalism, as of all forms of spiritual religion, is that its strongest point is its weakest point. This point in Evangelical religion is to be found in the doctrine of assurance. The power of Evangelical religion is never more clearly seen than when the objective certainty of Christ's atoning, reconciling, victorious work, revealed in his own person as crucified-risen, lays its grip on a man's soul, and then with compelling energy drives him out to bring others to the Saviour. The insipidity of Evangelical religion is discovered in a doctrine of assurance which has degenerated into a cultivation of feelings, when the reliance is laid not upon an objective fact but upon a subjective experience. The peril of Evangelical religion lies in the ease with which the transition from the one to the other can be made. No man who has known the first will shrink because of the risks involved. No man who has seen the barren tragedy of a "form of sound words" without life will forget the apostolic warning "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Simeon knew and practised a sure way to keep his religion deep. He approached the cross continually through the "Sanctus" and the prayer of "Humble Access." By that I do not mean that he was what is meant to-day by a frequent communicant, though he was always a devout and regular communicant. It is not the number of times we go to the Holy Communion that, of itself, is significant, but whether or not our whole life is impregnated with the spirit of the Liturgy, which spirit draws upon the deep

¹ Quoted by Edward Bickersteth in *A Companion to the Holy Communion*.

things of God. "Humbled in thankfulness" was his motto. Only such a religion is assured. Only such a religion is secure from complacency. And complacency is but another way of saying a "lazy posture of soul." No one can ever accuse these early Evangelicals of undervaluing the importance of preaching. None of them valued it higher or practised it more assiduously than Edward Bickersteth. Yet he could say of the Holy Communion

"Nowhere has the Christian a more perceptible and lively exhibition of the Gospel than in this Ordinance."¹

Granted a careful preparation, and assuming a Sermon which pointed to Christ, the crowning of the whole in the act of communion was the surest remedy for any "lazy posture of soul."

Without judging other men let us judge ourselves in the matter and see where we stand. We live at a time when the wind of the Spirit of God is reviving the dry bones of Evangelicalism, healing our divisions, and teaching us our place in the universal Church. On all sides we find a new desire for evangelism, a more enlightened understanding of the unfinished missionary task; a growing conviction that we have a message for society as well as for the individual; a humble determination to take our share in education; a new dedication to scholarship. All this is encouraging, but us let not forget the warning of Simeon and Bickersteth and a great host of witnesses. All these things, excellent in themselves, will get us nowhere if we lack depth. There will be no revival of our spiritual vitality if there is no revival of worship.

"It is so easy," wrote Bickersteth in a letter to a friend,

"to imagine that being busy in good works (either business, or societies, or schools) is religion, that there is a great danger lest we deceive ourselves, and forget that religion consists chiefly in the state of the soul before God, in the fixed bent of the will to serve him

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 118.

alone, in the surrender of the heart and affections in his cause and service, in meekness, piety, humility, love and deadness to the world."¹

Worship for us Evangelicals is not only expressed in the Holy Communion. The Quiet Time spent alone in prayer over the Word of God is for us a drawing near to the holy place when God speaks straight to the heart. Fellowship with one another in the things of God is another very lively occasion for worship. But here we are especially concerned with our worship in the service of Holy Communion. A revival of worship here will most certainly affect us at every other point. The plea of this book is that we shall study afresh our whole doctrine and practice with regard to the Lord's Supper in the light of the practice and teaching of the men to whom all Evangelicals look back with veneration. I suggest that this will involve us in a rediscovery of certain emphases which have too commonly been lacking, and for lack of which we are in want of an Evangelical expression of sacramental worship which gives worthy form to the central insights of our tradition.

We shall, I believe, have to reinvestigate our whole practice with regard to preparation for the Sacrament, and this will demand a careful study of the grounds upon which we recommend our people to base their rule of frequency.

In the second place we shall have to recognise the present divorce between the Sermon and the Sacrament, and their effective separation, so that for the majority of our people the Sacrament precedes the Sermon, or there is no Sermon; or the Sermon is not followed by the Sacrament. This divorce has introduced an element of sheer chaos into Evangelical worship, and there will be no real progress until this has been grappled with.

There follows from this the need for a carefully thought-out revision of the Prayer Book services, frankly recognising that as at present constituted and rubrically directed they do not adequately meet the needs of worship to-day, and

¹ T. R. Birks, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

this revision should be undertaken by Evangelical clergy and laity, assisted by liturgiologists of the kind who are aware that "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be" is not, in fact, the way in which the Church's worship has developed down the centuries. Such a revision would then be ready against the day, perhaps not long to be delayed, when the authorities of the Church will re-open the question of Prayer Book Revision. We have a rich heritage to safeguard, and a great tradition to enshrine, and it must not go by default.

Finally there is need for humble exploration together of the Victory of Christ our Lord to see whether we may not together discover there in that victory, and in the celebration of it enjoined by himself, a sufficiency of principle to yield a wide measure of agreement about those fundamentals which we desire to express in our worship.

And when we have done all this we shall remember that we shall still have failed if the manner of our working and the nature of our achievement does not lead men and women to fasten their eyes upon our Saviour himself, Christ crucified-risen, and then to receive from Him the power to share His victory. That victory sprung from the fiery embers of defeat has a special message for our time. In the squabbling disciples about that table long ago three years of love appeared to be going down to defeat. A betrayal and a perjuring and a flight were soon to stir those embers to sorry flame. Yet in that moment, by a mighty victory of faith, our Saviour took those individual men and knit them together into a community, binding them to himself and to each other in His own broken body and outpoured blood. It is the only secret of community in a world of lost souls.

Here at its most personal religion is most corporate. Here in the community each one finds himself, and the victory is won.

"Let us remember, that every additional communicant gained to attend the Lord's Supper in a right spirit,

who before altogether neglected it, or attended it only formally, is another inroad on the Kingdom of darkness, sin; and misery; and another approach towards the universal establishment of that blessed empire, which is *not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"¹

¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, p. 129.

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